WITH GYPSIES IN BULGARIA

ANDREAS
〈Mui Shuko〉

028.

dd N. Laski

30.6.16

WITH GYPSIES IN BULGARIA.

30-616. M. Gaster

WITH GYPSIES IN BULGARIA

BY

ANDREAS
(MUI SHUKO)

LIVERPOOL
HENRY YOUNG & SONS, LIMITED
1916

PO-PHRALENGGE.

To publish so long an account of so short a journey may be to risk classification with the insolent and over-bold globe-trotter, "who 'does' kingdoms in days and writes books upon them in weeks." Yet, at the time, the excursion seemed unusual and romantic enough to amuse my friends; and since then it may have acquired a wider interest owing to the fact that a multitude of my countrymen, and I myself, have adopted in Flanders, almost perforce though not unwillingly, and for an indefinitely long period, a habit of life resembling that which I lived in Bulgaria for pleasure. Some of those who, before the days of degrading advertisement and shamefully disguised compulsion, undertook eagerly the burden of national defence, have been my comrades for more than a year in the publicity of camps and bivouacs, enjoying that peculiarly tender intimacy and unselfishness, exercising that wonderful forbearance and tolerance, which, rare alike in the city streets and country mansions of so-called civilization, attain their majestic perfection, the universal brotherhood which Mohammedans both preach and practice, through long association in the field, and after common trials—summer's heat and dust, winter's cold and mud, discomfort, hunger, thirst, fatigue, sickness, danger, and often heroism. It is surely a strange war, where opponents at death-grips barter bully-beef for brandy:

2093840

where picture-palaces are set within easy reach of hostile artillery to entertain troops bent on slaughter; where a soldier can import luxuries and send his washing regularly home by post; and where the least callous of men may in a single day lose all his dearest friends, sigh "Ah! they were fine fellows," and proceed forthwith to refurnish his circle. But in it the veil has been torn from the soul, and the soul has stood forth unashamed, so beautiful, so admirable that we were amazed at the revelation. To my treasure has been added the love of men from every walk of life, who are—or were, for many will never again shake me by the hand—"more-than-brother" to me. To them I dedicate this little book, in which I attempt to describe a life similar to that which we led together.

The plates are from drawings by Mr. Robert Lyon, of Liverpool, and are founded on photographs taken by Mrs. Gilliat-Smith, and the Vice-Consul, to whom I have referred often, though not so often as their great kindness deserves.

CONTENTS.

Page

PREFACE . . . . . III.

LIST OF PLATES . . . . . VII.

CHAPTER I.

THE GYPSIES OF VARNA 1

CHAPTER II.

THE COMB-MAKERS 16

CHAPTER III.

TAKING TO THE ROADS 29

CHAPTER IV.

NORTH-EASTERN BULGARIA 41

CHAPTER V.

LIFE ON THE ROADS 52

CHAPTER VI.

THE LUCK OF THE WAGTAIL 63

CHAPTER VII.

MARKET-DAY AT RAZGRAD 75

CHAPTER VIII.

The Turkish Bath. 85

CHAPTER IX.

Gypsy Blacksmiths. 98

CHAPTER X.

The Feast at Rustshuk 110

CHAPTER XI.

More than Brother 121

CHAPTER XII.

The Relapse to Civilization . . . 134

LIST OF PLATES.

I.	Portrait of the Author .	Frontispiece.
		Page
II.	Zagundzhis	8
III.	A Zagundzhi Woman	24
IV.	Meti—A Zagundzhi	38
V.	Comb-Makers	54
VI.	Comb-Makers' Camp at Indzhe-Kiöi .	68
VII.	Petrika's Tent	86
VIII.	Petrika's Cart	100
IX.	Map of North-Eastern Bulgaria .	At End.

CHAPTER I.

THE GYPSIES OF VARNA.

"Needy nothing trimm'd in jollity."—*Shakespeare.*

The Balkan confederates, aided by their most powerful ally, Turkish mismanagement, had routed the Turks; the war was over; but, at the end of May, 1913, the blessings of peace, eagerly expected, had not yet reached Bulgaria. The work of slaughter was done, and in the south rifles and artillery at last were silent; but in the interior of the country warlike preparations were being pushed forward in breathless haste, as if a campaign were beginning and not ending. Young conscripts, mere lads, were enrolled two years before their time; those who had been exempted, for whatever reason, from military service were summoned to the colours; men of more than forty-five years, who had said farewell to the army for ever, as they thought, were recalled to their regiments; and even the Gypsies, hitherto

employed only as forced municipal labourers, were made soldiers. Ragged troops were being shipped to Varna from Thrace, and hurried westward by rail, none knew whither. Companies of elderly peasants, some of whom, rather pathetically, carried little tin lanterns containing candles, trudged to town from the country in their sheepskins and sandals, to be crushed into barracks that were already crowded. The foreign consuls were eagerly collecting news and enciphering dispatches to their ambassadors; the government offices and military headquarters were hives of industry; the authorities restless and suspicious. When the women of Varna, impatient at the continued absence of their men-folk, came in a body to the Prefecture to demand the return of their husbands or sons, sweethearts or brothers, the seven ringleaders were forthwith imprisoned. Arrested in the country by soldiers, who thought I was a spy because I associated with Gypsies, I was lectured and released by the general staff, who for the same reason believed me to be a lunatic, though for a while they entertained a suspicion that I and the British Vice-Consul, with the help of our Romany friends, were hatching a

conspiracy against the King! An indefinable excitement prevailed, something was in the air—for Bulgaria was then meditating the treachery which, a month later, brought her into simultaneous conflict with Servia, Greece, Montenegro, Turkey, and Rumania, and led to humiliation that was all the more bitter because it followed so closely her success in Thrace. The Tarpeian Rock was very near the Capitol!

I had come to Varna for a limited holiday, not completely master of my time; and, tempting as it was, for a Briton weary of political triviality, to wait and watch politics that mattered, I could not afford to be confined indefinitely by war in a foreign town. While hesitating about the choice of routes to what aliens in the Balkan States call Europe—a smaller continent than the Europe of atlases—I was caught in a trap: the Government took possession of the railway for military purposes, and passenger trains ceased to run. My position worried me the less because it provided a reasonable pretext for putting into practice a scheme which I knew would win the disapproval, and probably the derision, of all my respectable friends. I proposed to cross north-eastern

Bulgaria with Gypsies, disguised as a Gypsy, and escape into Rumania. My respectable friends did not disappoint me; but their concern took a kinder form than I expected: they were alarmed, assuring me that such an excursion would be dangerous at any time and was impossible in time of war. When, however, they saw that my resolution could not be shaken, they shrugged their shoulders and procured for me powerful passports in Bulgarian, which by good luck I never found occasion to use: one from the Prefect himself certifying that I travelled thus eccentrically in order to study the morals of the Gypsies, and the other from the very general who had lectured and released me, enjoining the army to render me every possible assistance.

The purchase of my kit was not a difficult matter. With a Gypsy as interpreter and a hundred francs in my pocket I visited sundry humble shops and returned with a big bundle of clothing and a little change. The bundle contained the costume worn by local Mohammedan Gypsies: like the Tartar disguise in which Borrow journeyed from Bucharest to Constantinople, it was "very beautiful and by

no means dear"; but it was not characteristically Gypsy, being simply the dress of a Turkish peasant. I had a short jacket *(thalik)* of bright blue cloth effectively braided in black; trousers *(kaltse)* of the same material similarly decorated, tight at the ankles and calves and amply voluminous above; a shirt-like waistcoat *(zabuna)* of yellow and red striped material; a sash *(kustik)* of thick scarlet stuff, five yards long and a foot wide, and a pair of stiff Turkish shoes which blistered my feet abominably. The fez and turban which I bought had to be replaced by a lamb's-wool *kalpak* or cap when I decided to travel as a Christian; and during the journey I added to my outfit linen drawers *(sosten)* and a second girdle, thereby making my costume almost intolerably hot. A gaudily coloured sack, after the pattern of the country, was to contain a few toilet luxuries, handkerchiefs and a change of underclothing; and for sleeping I provided only a Bulgarian quilted *yorgan*. I had expended less thought, time, trouble, and money than would have been needed to prepare for a week-end at Margate.

It only remained to choose my escort, and that was surely the easiest task of all. For

the Bulgarian Gypsies are needy—if it were possible to pity so gay a race one would describe them as pitifully poor—and it seemed reasonable to expect that, if I offered a couple of napoleons, I should be besieged by candidates. Moreover there were plenty to choose from among the half-dozen tribes, each speaking its own dialect of Romani, which are represented in Varna. Most of the Gypsies live in a Gypsy Quarter *(mahala)* on the plain, just beyond the town and between it and the municipal refuse-heap; a village of one wide and rather irregular street bordered by little single-roomed huts which are plastered with mud and whitewashed. Beyond the village again, and nearer still to the unsavoury public midden, are to be found, at any season except in winter, the ragged tents of the nomads; crude, clumsy shelters, to build which any old sticks and any tatters of decaying sackcloth seem to have been cast together at random; dwellings in which a humane hawker would refuse to stable his ass. Birds and beavers—even sticklebacks—construct better specimens of architecture.

The house-dwelling Gypsies have learned from the Turks a measure of tranquil dignity,

and are sharply distinguished from their nomad brethren whom, in contempt, they call Zagundzhis. The Zagundzhis live their life in a hurricane, never for an instant still. Even to watch them is exhausting. Like rabbits in a warren they are always dashing out of one tent and plunging into another; sometimes they may be found dancing with the grace of fauns, or singing strange half-unintelligible songs; more often they are talking excitedly at the top of their voices, shouting and yelling to one another in their rude tongue; or giving rein to their passions in sudden quarrels that are as fierce and brief as they are unexpected and inexplicable. They dress in splendidly picturesque rags, the wrecks of costumes such as I had bought or of sober Bulgarian homespun suits, so tattered and torn that large areas of brown velvety skin are exposed to the wind and sun. Their shirts display patterns the like of which are seen elsewhere only on wall-papers, and derive an additional kaleidoscopic brilliance from their patches, for the added pieces never match the attenuated remains of the original garment. Their feet are naked, and on their heads are placed, at a jaunty angle which is not

native in the Balkans, faded, shapeless fezes without tassels, but sometimes girt by lean rags apologizing for turbans. The costume is unstudied in the extreme, yet worn with elegance, adorning without concealing the splendid lines of their magnificent bodies. The women are less ragged but equally gaudy, and the tents are thronged by half-naked children. The Zagundzhis do not look dirty, for in the near East dirt is not black and adhesive, but white and powdery, and—it crawls. In this kind of property they are unenviably rich.

Dirt, however, is not their only fault: they eat carrion—the flesh of animals that have died; and, what is more discomfiting for visitors, they are importunate beggars. They beg, all of them, at all times, in the persistent and irresistible Gypsy way, for everything they see or suspect that their patron may possess: a visit to their camp costs as much as a stall at the opera. There was then nothing more attractive than a picture-palace in Varna, but had there been a theatre I should have preferred the tents of the filthy Zagundzhis. Their glamour was such that one kept no reckoning—one emptied one's pockets and praised Allah that such folk

ZAGUNDZHIS—*See Chapter I.*

existed. They are Gypsies *par excellence:* in them the Gypsy character, which among more sophisticated tribes is wrapped in a habit of Gentile *(gadzho)* respectability, stands proudly forth, naked, unconscious, unashamed. They are, as the poetic instinct of Franz Liszt discerned, children; with a child's indifference to public opinion, a child's unquestioning acceptance of destiny, a child's instinctive timidity, a child's unconsciousness of causes, a child's sudden outbursts of rage and equally sudden recovery of temper, and at the same time a child's unreasoning happiness and a child's responsiveness to sympathy. Across their marvellously expressive faces moods and emotions pass like clouds on a windy day. Lithe as panthers, strong as lions, playful as kittens, affectionate as dogs, one loved them as one loves a dog, caring not one whit whether they have read Shakespeare, can play golf, or are capable of admiring Turner. They are scarcely human —but they are the most beautiful of animals.

With one Zagundzhi, the tall and graceful Meti, I was specially familiar. He had undertaken to teach me his difficult dialect, and we had spent many pleasant hours together study-

ing Romani and beer. Perhaps it was the want of any other language of intercommunication, for I know neither Turkish nor Bulgarian, or perhaps it was Meti's faulty pedagogic method, but I made little progress. My tutor would chatter eloquently for a spell and then, suddenly stopping, turn upon me the light of a winning smile and ask inconsequently: "How do you do, brother?" *(Sar keres, phrala?)*. That phrase I learned to understand perfectly: the rest of his conversation was always, to me, somewhat obscure. Nevertheless we became excellent friends, and when I resolved to travel with Gypsies I invited him and his family to be my escort. He consented, subject to the approval of the chief *(tsheribashi)*, for the Gypsies of the *mahala*, both sedentary and nomad, acknowledged the authority of Osman the son of Osman, who then kept a little café planted on an island site in the middle of the village street, In consequence the British Vice-Consul and I paid a visit of ceremony to the great man, hoping to obtain readily the required permission.

Osman's café, the town-hall of the Gypsy *mahala*, is a little low room about eighteen feet

square, with small windows in three of the walls, the fourth being a party-wall of another house or room. At a corner next this party-wall is the door, and, close to it, the cash-box, behind which stands Osman's throne, a narrow wooden platform raised high above the floor, just large enough to accommodate the *tsheri-bashi*, or his deputy, sitting cross-legged. Beyond this throne, against the party-wall and reaching to the back of the room, is the most honourable seat, a much larger though lower platform covered with matting. Behind a partition screen, in the corner diagonally opposite the door, is the kitchen : a fire of wood-charcoal with tiny saucepans, each just big enough to make one cup of coffee, shelves on which are ranged glasses and little handleless cups, and a great earthenware vase of water half-buried in the ground. To the right of the door as one enters is a bench, in front of which stands a small table with a couple of stools ; and, between this bench and the kitchen, there is a platform similar to the more honourable seat opposite. The walls and ceiling are whitewashed and undecorated, and the floor is the bare earth hardened by much traffic.

Osman received us with his usual courtesy, and, as always happened on such occasions, some of the elders of the sedentary tribe, venerable gentlemen of serious mien and polished manners, well dressed, bearded, and wearing turbans, assembled to drink coffee at our expense and listen to the words of wisdom that would fall from the lips of the great ones. Osman's suavity and politeness to us were in strong contrast with the ultra-emphasis or violence of his communications to his subjects. Belonging to a different tribe, and speaking a slightly different dialect, not tall, wiry rather than muscular, not even rich, it could only have been intellectual superiority that raised him to the dignity of *tsheribashi* of a *mahala* of 180 houses, a position officially recognised by the government. Not long after our visit Osman fell with the political party which had put him in power; but even before his fall he had critics and opponents, and his tenure of office depended in some measure on the goodwill of his subjects, who have the right to petition the Prefect to depose their chief. In consequence, he evidently felt it necessary to keep a tight hold over the people he governed. When he spoke, it was

generally to address the whole company; when he commanded silence, they scarce dared draw breath. He was eloquent and persuasive, delighted in oriental platitudes, and often expressed what he had to say in the form of a parable. Nor did he neglect to use theatrical devices to give emphasis to his words: he gesticulated freely; at critical parts of the argument his restless eyes seemed to start from their bony sockets; and once we saw him drive home a point by raising a heavy stool above his head, and flinging it with all his force upon the floor. Unconsciously following the precept of Machiavelli, he chose to be feared rather than loved. If we visited the *mahala* alone, we were at once exasperated by a flock of begging children and importunate women; but if Osman were with us, nobody ventured to approach. He was certainly a great ruler: but the very qualities that made him great made him a little disappointing as a Gypsy—he had none of the bewitching levity of his race.

Every tribe of Gypsies despises every other tribe: and the sedentary dwellers in the *mahala* looked down upon their nomad neighbours with peculiar scorn. The debonair Vice-Consul in

consequence, after the customary prelude of general conversation and cigarettes, broached the subject of my proposed journey very cautiously, explaining the circumstances, emphasizing the necessity that I should have an escort of people who were accustomed to the road, manœuvring dexterously to avoid wounding Osman's prejudices or pride, and leading gradually up to the terrible confession that I had seen fit to choose as my companions the contemptible Zagundzhis. Osman listened without interrupting, but his mouth set sternly while his eyes glared with growing amazement. When the case had been stated and permission asked there was a pause, and then the chief, lifting his head, commanded suddenly, "Listen, all!" The elders at once gave earnest attention. "This great one wishes to travel with the Zagundzhis!" The elders drew in their breath, shuddered with obedient horror, and made gestures of protest. It was as if the Lord Mayor had announced to the aldermen that the King proposed to sweep Petticoat Lane. "He will be covered with lice to the elbows," Osman continued, "they will give him hens to eat that have died a natural death; they will rob him,

cut his throat in the night, and leave his body in a ditch." Again the elders shuddered at my fate. "I would rather all my children should die!" And then, with a resounding blow on the little table, and the voice of a tyrant determining the fate of a nation: "I will not allow it!"

CHAPTER II.

THE COMB-MAKERS.

Our diplomatic mission, our visit of ceremony, had failed and my position remained as uncomfortable as ever. For awhile I cheered myself with the delusion that a golden key would easily open the door of escape, but after offering what must have been regarded by the Zagundzhis as a small fortune, I realized that Osman's authority was so great that, as a result of his prohibition made thus publicly, no Gypsy could be found in the Mohammedan *mahala* over which he ruled, who was willing to risk his displeasure by travelling with me. Meti withdrew his promise at once, declaring that the chief would kill him if he disobeyed, and that the expedition was impossible.

At first the only solution of the difficulty appeared to be the winning or buying of Osman's approval, and he showed no signs of yielding. But just as matters seemed to have reached a hopeless impasse, there arrived near Varna a party of eight tents of Christian

Gypsies who did not acknowledge Osman's authority. They had none of the reason-destroying allurement of the Zagundzhis—one did not love them for the sake of their dirt and rags and vermin, and the glorious savagery implied. If they had been dirty and ragged, one would have respected them in spite of their faults: not for their faults' sake. But as a matter of fact they appeared at first sight to be clean, honest, industrious folk, polite, hospitable, and well provided with the necessaries of their nomad life. They were not town-Gypsies: they did not beg, and the children were so shy that, when addressed by strangers, they covered their faces with their hands and cried.

They had good strong carts and excellent weatherproof tents. Their carts *(taligas)* are gaily painted troughs, on the back-boards of which are circles containing some naïvely executed picture, a bunch of flowers, or a rearing horse, and at each side are iron steps connected with splash-boards over the four wheels. The trough, or body, rests in a cradle on the two axles, but is not attached to them rigidly, the axles themselves being connected together

by a central beam, a method of construction which gives great flexibility, and enables the vehicle, although springless, to travel the worst roads without disaster. The tents are made of goat's-hair cloth, hard, rough, and very thick: they are expensive, for a suitable piece costs eight napoleons. The cloth is supported partly by the *taliga* itself, which it covers and protects, and partly by a framework of poles. Of these there are five, besides the pole of the *taliga*, which makes the sixth—two poles morticed to form the front triangle; the thin back-post *(beli)* resting on the ground, and steadied by insertion through the step of the waggon; the horizontal ridge-pole *(berand)*; and two other horizontal poles, one of them the driving pole of the waggon, which rest on the *taliga* at the back of the tent, and are tied to the front poles half-way between their intersection and the ground. The cart thus stands within the tent to which it forms the back, and the cloth is pegged out by means of goat's-hair cords attached at regular intervals, so that the edge is about six inches from the earth. Such a tent, compared with the dwellings of the Zagundzhis, was a palace.

The tribe had come to Varna in order to work at the harvest, where the men expected to earn about two francs a day; but their ostensible means of livelihood was making combs, a profession in which they showed great dexterity. They bought the horns of cattle, cut them into short cylinders which they split longitudinally and flattened by heat and pressure, shaped the piece, smoothed it with a rasp and polished it with ashes; then they cut the teeth with unexpected regularity by means of two hand-saws, one fine, and the other coarse, and finished the comb with a little crude decoration in double lines by rocking the handle-end of a file across the surface of the horn. A man could produce thirty combs a day, but their profits were probably limited rather by the number they could sell than by the number they could make.

So much I learned by two visits to their picturesquely situated camp near Indzhe-Kiöi, a little village about three miles from Varna, and I found also that their Rumanian Romani, owing to my previous experience with a similar dialect, was far more easily intelligible than the dialects formed under Turkish and Bulgarian

influence that I had heard in Osman's *mahala*. My favourable first impression was confirmed at the second visit, when the comb-makers entertained the Vice-Consul and myself with food and drink, and gossiped pleasantly, if not with the inconsequent light-heartedness of the Zagundzhis; and, later in the evening, they won my heart completely when, without comment, they raised the side-cloth of the tent in order that all might admire a beautiful sunset. I decided that these models of Gypsy propriety would be most desirable travelling companions, and, seeing that with their help it would be easy to evade the difficulties caused by Osman's prohibition, I lost no time, but broached the subject at once, and made arrangements for escape.

At both visits I had associated with the family of Petrika and Totana, his third wife, whom he had married about six months before. Petrika was a sedate man at least fifty years old, with a moustache but no beard, and a long, straight, though somewhat fleshy nose. He had had children by his two previous wives, and four of them were in the camp: Stano, with his wife Tudora and boy Kirtsho; Turi, with his

wife and child; Kira, then recently married to Ristem, who was a refined-looking youth of seventeen, son of Totana by her late husband Ilia; and an unmarried girl, Rada. To mark their Christianity the men wore sheepskin *kalpaks* instead of fezes and turbans, but their clothes were otherwise similar, with some minor differences of braiding, to my disguise, though Turi's *zabuna* was made of dark crimson velvet, and his jacket *(thalik)* had a fur lining. Turi was a sturdy young fellow of a pleasant if unenergetic temperament, and not handsome. He had a pretty but shy little girl, Rusa, the only one of his four children who had lived, and his wife Gina was a very dark woman, handsome and industrious. The greater part of the household work fell to her share. Suitably dressed she would have been beautiful, but, owing to her husband's poverty, she had unbecoming clothes; a heavy dark woollen shawl, for instance, over her head instead of a gay kerchief, and she went without shoes or stockings. She was, moreover, remarkably silent: I do not think we exchanged six sentences during the week I spent with her people; and she was almost equally reserved towards her husband's parents.

She did not smoke in the presence of her father-in-law; but when he was away, or so occupied as to be unlikely to notice, she would take a cigarette from me, unroll it, borrow her mother-in-law's little pipe, and enjoy a whiff.

Unlike Persians and Arabs, who are proud of their genealogy, the Gypsies resemble the Turks, who thus express their faith in the equality of all classes of Ottomans, and the democratic Bulgarians, in having no surnames. As some compensation each Gypsy boasts two personal names of his own, one for home and the other for official use. Petrika was known to the police and other ordinary people as Gyorgi, Totana as Kostandina, Turi as Todor, and Ristem as Tanasi. When it is necessary to define a person more exactly, the name of his or her father is added in the genitive case, as, for example, Turi (son) of Petrika, and Totana (daughter) of Shudrila.

It was Totana who afterwards betrayed to me gradually that the pleasant spectacle I had seen at Indzhe-Kiöi was but the obverse of a medal which had another side differently designed. She was a very dark old lady, mischievous-looking and witchlike, and the

somewhat uncanny impression she made was enhanced by her deep, almost manly voice, and by her restless eyes, which seemed to glitter with weird intelligence, and were all the more striking because their owner, with oriental propriety, kept in the background and spoke but little. A large gold coin hung from her neck, and under the kerchief on her head she wore a little red skull-cap to which, after the manner of Bulgarian and Greek peasants, she had stitched several medals and pieces of silver money. The most conspicuous article in her attire, and in that of the other elderly women, was, however, a long apron gaily embroidered in many colours. In spite of her correct reserve it was easy to see that Totana had a will of her own and a strong character—too strong probably for conventional standards and strait moralists. She had always been very wild, the Gypsies said, and when she was young her hair was long, bushy, and tangled. She could not bear to stay more than a short time in one place, and on the road she went like a swift horse. They would add, whispering: "And she used to beat her husband, the old Ilia, who is dead now." When I met her, her

hair was thinner and turning grey, but her passion for travel was unabated. She had all Borrow's contempt of respectability; and, scenting as I believe a secret sympathy, saw that there was no need to play for my benefit the tiresome rôle of the unco guid, and took pains to bring about a thorough understanding. Petrika, in a careless moment, had apologized for his wife's lack of facial charm, saying that although she was not beautiful she was extraordinarily clever at catching hens. One could misunderstand, or affect to misunderstand that; but there was no obscurity in Totana's revelations. She began by explaining the connexion between a secret inner pocket in her begging bag, and the boiled fowl which formed an important element in their diet. Then she showed an intelligent interest—and an unjustifiable delight—in the petty misdeeds of British Gypsies. "Do they steal?" "Yes," I replied, "a little." "What do they steal?" "Turnips and firewood," I said, and then as an afterthought, "hens occasionally." A little chuckle assured me of Totana's approval, and I ventured to add: "And sometimes the washing from hedges." "But don't they burgle houses?"

A ZAGUNDZHI WOMAN—*See Chapter I.*

I gave an indignant denial, but Totana, after searching in the recesses of her voluminous skirts, produced a parcel wrapped in cloth, and saying, scornfully, "We do," opened it to show me the keys she used for the purpose.

The temperaments of Totana and her spouse seemed almost incompatible. He too may have had a wild youth, but little wildness had survived, and when he married her he was already a comfort-loving and rather dull elderly man, who rejoiced to find a pleasant spot and camp there quietly for weeks at a stretch. It was rumoured that her relations had often urged Totana to leave him, and certainly his indolent habit of life must have been very trying to a woman of her activity. Not long after I left Bulgaria there was a crisis of which the Vice-Consul was witness. He was celebrating, with the comb-makers, the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, sacrificing sheep, making candles from their fat to fasten to their horns, burning incense over the food, sprinkling it with wine, and devoting the day to eating, drinking, many songs and much merriment. There had been no known quarrel between Totana and her husband, but through-

out the evening she wept bitterly; and at night, when all the Gypsies were abed, Petrika was heard to raise his voice in anger and threaten that, in the morning, he would cut off his wife's hair. When morning dawned Totana had fled. There was great consternation when her escape was discovered: the Gypsies, afoot or in *taligas*, scoured the country for miles around, but the old lady had vanished without leaving a trace, and at last they were obliged to resume mournfully their ordinary occupations. A few days afterwards Totana reappeared with fourteen napoleons in her pocket and the joy of triumph in her face, and was received with jubilations. Weary of respectability, bored to death, yearning for adventure, she had raided a farmhouse about ten miles from the camp and burglariously appropriated twenty napoleons. She had been arrested by two policemen, had softened their hearts and closed their mouths with three napoleons apiece, and, having thoroughly enjoyed her little holiday, felt strong enough to return and face again her usual comparatively monotonous life.

The haloes of rectitude I had placed on the heads of my Gypsy friends were evidently

uncomfortable, for when Totana had torn hers off, the men followed her example and with one accord pitched the insignia of sanctity into the ditch. Several times during the journey they invited me to be their accomplice in sheep-stealing expeditions, but, fearing a sentence of three years' imprisonment, I was obliged regretfully to decline. It cannot have been long after our start when they explained that they did not depend for their livelihood entirely on the useful occupations of comb-making and farm-labour. Their real calling, they almost boasted, was the ancient and lucrative, if dangerous, profession of horse-stealing. Now horse-stealing in Bulgaria is a science, and by no means an easy trade to be recommended for the bungling younger sons of suburban Philistines. The owner of a horse in that most civilized country is obliged by law to own also a certificate on which is written a full and particular description of the animal. When, therefore, a Gypsy decides that it is necessary that he should possess a steed, he must first obtain from a venal Bulgar (for dishonest Bulgars do exist) a properly authenticated document; and, since he is illiterate,

must learn its contents by heart. Then he undertakes an extended tour, inspecting horses everywhere, until he finds one that matches his certificate. This horse he steals. Far from being a degrading trade, the theft of horses is a vocation in which an intelligent Gypsy can take an honest pride, and those who follow it with any success retain, like certain Britons who borrow umbrellas and smuggle cigars, the sentiment of honour intact.

I confess, however, that had I known these things at the time when I was about to trust myself to the guidance and protection of acquaintances of untried fidelity and unknown antecedents, whom I had met for the first time but a couple of days before, I might have hesitated. Fortunately I did not know them, and placed myself in the comb-makers' hands with every confidence. That I had no cause to regret this confidence the following chapters will prove.

CHAPTER III.

TAKING TO THE ROADS.

Petrika had undertaken readily enough to convey me from Varna to Rustshuk for the sum of five napoleons. I suppose I agreed too eagerly, for he afterwards raised the price to seven *galbi*; but, when this advance was conceded, stood honestly by his bargain and made no further effort to extort a larger fee. The details of the contract were vague: there was to be a *taliga* (cart) and horses, the journey was to last about six days, no change was to be made on my account in the diet or habits of the Gypsies, and on Tuesday, June 3rd, 1913, they were to call for me at the British Vice-Consulate. At the time, I was well pleased with the arrangement; but when Tuesday came and, having dressed myself in my disguise, I sat rather sulkily awaiting my escort, it was towards the asses and ragged tents of the Moslem nomads that my thoughts wandered; not towards the tidy camp of the Christian comb-makers. The

latter were to have come at nine o'clock, but did not, and when eleven o'clock struck a hope grew within me that, Gypsylike, they would fail me, and that I should be free to attempt once more to wring an unwilling consent from Osman, and make my journey with the Zagundzhis. And so when, about midday, Petrika and his son Turi at last arrived in the *taliga*, disappointment rather than welcome was written on my face, as, having bidden farewell to my indulgent hostesses, I set out for Indzhe-Kiöi.

Somewhat self-conscious in my strange attire, I glanced furtively to this side and that, as we threaded the unmade earthen roads of Varna, between the vulgar stucco villas, and past the grotesque cathedral, meet temple of fanatical hatred; but it was evident that I attracted less attention than I had been used to receive when clothed in western garb. We halted for a moment in the market-place, to buy grass for the horses, and as we left the town on the side near Osman's *mahala* young Toso, Meti's brother, recognizing me, started suddenly from some corner and ran beside the cart, grinning and shouting and waving his

arms—brown, bright-eyed, ragged and gay, his straight black hair falling in irregular locks on his forehead from under his fez. At heart I loathed the staid comb-makers, and would joyfully have leapt from their *taliga;* but all I dared to do was to wave the lad a cold salute. And so the Zagundzhis passed, as it seemed, out of my life and left me for the moment beggared of joy. If I have dwelt unnecessarily on the affection I cherished for this wildest of all Gypsy tribes—eaters of carrion, importunate beggars, indescribably filthy—it is not because I am blind either to their faults or to the virtues of other Gypsies; but rather because I have been blamed for the infatuation and wish to record my gratitude to these friendly people for being so happy and so beautiful. I have now said all I need—not all I would say, nor so well as I would say it—and they will require no further reference here, although I thought—still think—of them often, and often dreamed of them under the clear stars at night.

When near Indzhe-Kiöi, Turi and I left the *taliga* and walked over the grass towards the tents. He told me that he wished to be a

member of the party, but that, if he went, he would lose the two francs he earned as daily wages by farm-labour, and asked whether I would allow him five days' pay (ten francs). Fearing that the constant companionship of his tiresome old father would prove tedious, I gave him evident pleasure by consenting at once. Petrika's tent was still standing, and, thinking that the packing-up would take some time, a party of us, including Petrika himself, the Vice-Consul, and Ristem, strolled away to a little roadside khan, sat down in the veranda, and ordered drinks. Packing-up, however, was but a moment's work for the women, and the loaded cart arrived almost as soon as the beer. The small baggage had been stowed in the bottom, then the carpets and rugs, the whole being covered by the great black tent-cloth, while the poles of the tent lay along the sides of the cart and projected behind. The *taliga* was drawn by two horses, small, wiry, and somewhat ill-matched, one of them difficult to catch and harness, and in consequence described as *dillo* (mad). Petrika asked for payment in advance, and I gave him four of the seven napoleons promised, engrossing an

elaborate receipt on the back of the German Consul's beautifully written invitation to dinner. This Petrika, instead of signing, wrapped in paper and put carefully away, though he used to take it out and admire the wrong side of it almost daily during our journey. I agreed to pay the balance of the sum at Rustshuk in the presence of the British Consular Agent, from whom the Gypsies were to obtain a receipt for my delivery in an undamaged condition. These preliminaries settled to the satisfaction of all, we were ready to start and our farewells began: Turi kissed his brother Stano on both cheeks, Ristem drew me aside and asked for a keep-sake, the Vice-Consul shook hands, wishing me Gypsy luck, and we arranged ourselves as best we could on the cart.

In front, on the right, sat old Petrika crosslegged, driving, with his wife Totana immediately behind him. On his left I found a place, somewhat insecure when the *taliga* jolted unmercifully over ditches and stones, with Turi close at my back. Beyond Turi and his step-mother, where there was a valley in the tent-cloth between the projecting poles,

sat his wife Gina, holding her pretty little girl Ruza. These were my five companions, but I must not omit to mention the great white dog, three years old, who guarded the tent at night, and trotted beside the *taliga* as we drove along. He was called Grivei, which my Rumanian dictionary translates by "dapple," but he was not spotted; he was a wise dog, gentle to us and never troublesome, but as brave as a lion. Village curs are astonishingly numerous in Bulgaria, very inhospitable, and rather dangerous; but those who ventured to speak uncivilly to Grivei as we passed, apologized humbly after his first snarl and rush. He was magnanimous, too, for he always accepted the apology at once, and never paused to give the offender the punishment his impertinence deserved. Nobody petted him or took much notice of him, and he lived, I think, on the bones and crumbs we left; yet he was a faithful animal and handsome, and he deserves my gratitude. If we sat round the dying fire after nightfall, his intelligent face, gazing in from outer darkness through the flickering light, completed the picture, and added a sense of security and comfort.

I have often wondered whether I had any misgivings, when, against the counsel of prudent friends, I set out from that little khan in such equivocal society to plunge into the interior of a country that was disorganized by war, deprived of railway communications, and peopled by representatives of several jealous races, with none of whom I could exchange a single word of conversation, but who all, except the Turks, are barbarian at heart in spite of an ancient Christianity and a new cheap plaster civilization which is rather apt to peel. I do not remember that I was uneasy; probably I was too well assured that I would be accepted by the Gypsies as one of their own kin to doubt their fidelity, and too confident in their address to fear external dangers; and I think that the Vice-Consul himself shared my living faith in the proverb: "Hawks do not peck out hawks' een." Not so Osman son of Osman, the *tsheribashi*. He was professedly a Mohammedan, but with that indifference to the essentials of religion which characterizes his race he had adopted, instead of Turkish tolerance, the pitiful inter-religious rancour which is rife among Balkan Christians,

and detested the comb-makers so cordially, because they were nominally Christian, that he almost forgot that they were brother Gypsies. He could believe no good of them, and his intense hatred compelled him afterwards to refuse to accept my photograph because Turi and Gina were in the picture. When the news reached him, doubtless through young Toso, that I had left Varna in Petrika's cart, he was unfeignedly anxious. He went at once to the Vice-Consulate to bewail my probable fate, and sitting with a glass in his hand, ever and anon instinctively attempted to emphasize his words by pouring a libation of beer on the carpet, recollecting suddenly where he was, and just in time refraining. The burden of his lament was that I had delivered myself into the hands of thieves and murderers who would cut my throat by night. It would have been better to have travelled even with the Zagundzhis ; although they would have begged without mercy, they were incapable of treachery and violence. But to protect me from such discomfort, and from the danger I was so rashly courting, he himself, chief though he was, would have acted as my

guide. The Vice-Consul tried vainly to make him understand that, since he was a sedentary Gypsy (*yerli*), the condescension could not have been accepted, and, casting the blame on Osman himself, showed that the real cause of all the trouble was his refusal to allow the Zagundzhis to accompany me. This was undeniable, and poor Osman, apprehending disaster, departed very sorrowfully.

It is impossible to approve Osman's attitude, but easy to explain it. Occupying a responsible position, he was guided by a standard of honour higher than is usual among Gypsies, and Islam had had more effect on his character than Christianity on that of the comb-makers, whom he doubtless regarded as not much better than Bulgarians. He knew, I suppose, but little of the Koran, but he was heir to the noble traditions of the Turkish people, and to the principles of the Mohammedan religion: traditions and principles which have still an extraordinarily powerful influence on conduct. The comb-makers, on the other hand, identified themselves more or less with a nation in whose superstitious Church simony was lately rampant, and whose peasants, oppressed

more cruelly by their clergy than by their governors, were glad not long ago to look to Turkish beys for protection from the exactions of their illiterate priests. Probably the standard of Bulgarian Christianity has risen since her emancipation from Turkish rule, and schooling has certainly made great strides; but the effects of a long period of moral neglect and religious misguidance are not rapidly corrected. It is well within the memory of living men that the Greek clergy of Bulgaria taught that it was no sin to rob or cheat a Mussulman, but that it was wicked to give alms to a Gypsy. The effect of such Christianity on a dour, cloddish, unimaginative race like the Bulgarians could only be further degradation. Thus we find Consul-General Longworth reporting, in 1867, that of the three hundred or four hundred claims for the recovery of debts which were brought before a mixed commission, all those against Turks were at once admitted, whether substantiated by written receipts, or only by oral testimony; of those preferred in the same manner by Turks against Christians, not one was acknowledged!

METI—A ZAGUNDZHI—*See Chapter I.*

On Gypsies, of course, such Christianity could have no influence at all, and it was natural that nominally Christian Gypsies, like the comb-makers, should retain more of the Gypsy outlook and attitude than did Osman, and, knowing that the hands of all men are against them, regard all men as lawful prey.

There is a story of the siege of Varna, in 1444, which well illustrates the difference between the two great Balkan religions. George Brankovitsh, belonging to the Greek Church, and doubtful which side to favour, asked the Roman Catholic Hunyades what he would do if victory favoured him. Hunyades replied that he would compel the inhabitants to confess his creed. Brankovitsh then approached the Sultan with the same question, and received the reply that a church should be built near every mosque in order that the people might, according to their faith, cross themselves in the one, or prostrate themselves in the other. For the Turks have always respected the injunction of Othman when dying, in 1326, to his son, "Give equal protection to all thy subjects," and have maintained religious liberty throughout their empire. That they should wish to follow simultaneously

another of his precepts, "Extend the law of the Prophet," is but natural, since that law not only enjoins but produces patience, discipline, sobriety, cleanliness, bravery, honesty, modesty, and even humanity—virtues which, as an old Christian missionary in Constantinople had once occasion to remind his younger colleagues, are more talked about in Christendom than practised.

CHAPTER IV.

NORTH-EASTERN BULGARIA.

A VISITOR who judged by what he saw at Varna, and on the plain in which it lies, would take north-eastern Bulgaria to be quite occidental, and very much like any other country. The town itself is unblushingly modern: there are bathing-places on the shore of the Black Sea; there is a park; the school, barracks and cathedral are conspicuous; foreign steamers unload in the harbour; gardens and great tracts of common pasture are found on the outskirts; the lake of Devna suggests a well-watered hinterland; good highways seem to lead in various directions; there are isolated villas and farm-houses, trees, fences, and even factory chimneys. The district looks rather unfinished, but nothing is distinctive or peculiar. Excepting for a short coast-line, the plain is hemmed in by a wall of low hills, and the British traveller assumes innocently that, after climbing up their near side, he will be able to descend on the other into similar country. My

first discovery, on making the experiment, was that the good roads, which seemed to invite excursions, became much less alluring as soon as the town was out of sight, and almost hinted that there was the point to turn back. When, after scrambling through deep-sunk lanes, and along hill-side paths, I arrived very hot at the top of the heights, and was anticipating an easy downward journey beyond, I was amazed to find myself on a great tableland, which began abruptly, and was, like the plain I had just left, itself fringed by low hills, the edge of a third and yet higher plateau.

Personally conducted by Petrika and his family, I crawled from the level of the sea up this flight of enormously wide but low steps, feeling like an ant on a staircase, until we began to descend into the valley of the Danube. It was a tedious alternation: first a short, sharp pull, from the end of one plateau to the beginning of the next; then a long, dreary drive across the plain; then another ascent. Our day was as monotonous as recurring decimals, or as the infinite repetitions of those oriental melodies, which Balkan Gypsies love to coax from clarinets and drums. The table-

lands are astonishingly fertile by reason of their great depth of rich soil, but they are hot and dry. In the uncultivated parts, the grass was so thin and scanty that there was little or no grazing, and our horses had to depend almost entirely on what we cut with our knives from the roadside and collected in a sack as we drove along. The landscape was without features, the scenery unattractive. Later, as we approached Rustshuk, trees and villages were more numerous, and occasional woods appeared. But during the first part of our journey the land was totally unenclosed, bare of trees, and planted with immense areas of corn and maize. The plains were so spacious that the sense of loneliness numbed one: seldom did we see a peasant tilling with an antique plough; isolated farms and cottages were entirely absent; villages were rare, and generally hidden in folds of the ground, or clefts in the limiting rampart of hills. It was difficult to understand how so sparse a population could cultivate so huge a tract.

Something should, perhaps, be discounted from the cheerless impression the country gave, on the ground that I travelled with despised

outcasts, who may have had reasons of their own for avoiding villages where Petrika anticipated unfriendly attention from the police, or the recognition of one of his horses by a former owner. Doubtless, too, the solitude was accentuated by recent loss of life in the war with Turkey, and by mobilization for the war against the allies; but even in times of peace north-eastern Bulgaria must have the appearance of being almost uninhabited. Not long ago, when the country was in a disturbed state and under a weak government, to have lived in isolated houses would have been impossible, for their tenants would have been murdered and robbed within a week. So the peasants gathered themselves together for protection, and, as in all countries which have been recently under the dominion of Turkey, placed their villages as far as possible from the main roads, and concealed them in sequestered nooks to elude observation. To have set them in conspicuous or convenient situations would have been to invite the attention of marauding hordes, and encourage the unwelcome visits of officials, troops, and zaptiehs, whom the villagers would have been obliged to entertain without hope of

remuneration. The causes no longer exist, but the effects remain. At another season we should probably have seen the people working in the fields, and passing to or from their homes and their labour; but the harvest was not yet ripe, and even the roads were deserted.

When, as sometimes happened, we came to a village, the women took bags and walked through it in search of food, while we drove round to meet them at the opposite side. Thus I saw less than I could have wished of the rural inhabitants. The country through which we passed contains Bulgarians and Turks in approximately equal numbers, besides representatives of several other races, and each different section of the population keeps itself separate in villages of its own. The various tribes have not appropriated great districts as have the English, Scots, Irish and Welsh, nor when they approach one another do they dwell together in amity as next-door neighbours like the several sects of Britons. Sometimes one saw a slender minaret, and knew that the hamlet it graced was exclusively Moslem; sometimes one saw a church, and understood that those who dwelt near it were all Christians. Some-

times one would be told, "That is a Turkish village; its name is Day has Dawned." At other times, "This is a Christian village: all the men are drunkards." It is this juxtaposition of naturally hostile peoples which makes the problems of Balkan politics insoluble. In that unhappy peninsula there are not simply one Dublin and one Belfast, between which an infinite number of dividing lines could easily be drawn, but hundreds of Dublins and hundreds of Belfasts, mixed intimately and fortuitously. No lines can ever group together the districts inhabited respectively by Turks, Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs, Vlachs, Tatars, and Circassians: they are distributed like variously coloured marbles in a bottle. The difficulty is further intensified by religion, for there are Bulgars who are Greeks and Bulgars who are Mohammedan, and every church and every race loathes all the rest, and none, except perhaps the Turk, can be trusted to rule any of the others.

For the whole of the first two days of our journey, and occasionally afterwards, the roads we travelled would have been considered impassable by a prudent driver. Stumbling-blocks the size of portmanteaux were as common as

daisies, great ditches crossed the track, and we passed over the dry beds of streams which would have made picturesque rockeries in a city park. The jolting was prodigious, and sometimes old Petrika seemed to take a malicious delight in rushing the obstacles at a canter, playing a game of cup-and-ball with his passengers. It seemed a miracle that we fell back into our places: a miracle, too, that the *taliga* held together. There were, of course, no springs, and the buffeting was such as would have wrecked any British cart. There have been periods in the history of Turkey when a rage for building highways consumed the funds, and wonderful feats were accomplished. The making of these royal roads impressed the popular imagination, and legends about it have been transferred, as legends so often are, to more recent achievements. It is said in Varna, for instance, that the very new road, reputed the best in Bulgaria, which leads from the town to the King's country palace, was begun and finished in a single night. Extraordinary efforts were, however, sometimes really made. When, in 1837, Sultan Mahmûd II. visited his fortresses on the lower Danube, a few weeks

sufficed to construct a special road from Constantinople across the Balkans to Shumla, with bridges over the rivers, and pavilions where His Majesty might pass the night or halt for refreshment. Unfortunately the Turks, after lavishing a fortune to build a road, grudge a penny to keep it in repair, and in a short time it becomes impracticable for wheeled vehicles. An English traveller who looked for Mahmûd's highway about ten years after it had been made, reported that it had disappeared under rank herbage, that the elements in league with the torrents had swept away the bridges, and that the only visible memorial of the Sultan's progress then consisted of a few ruinous pavilions converted into khans. Several times during our journey we came upon the great *chaussée* connecting Varna with Rustshuk, which Midhat Pasha built for all time during his short administration (1865–7). It is paved with great blocks of stone, and so sturdy that the country folk never use it except to cross it, preferring parallel side-tracks of their own made by the repeated passages of their carts over the bare earth. These tracks consist of a double path, one for each horse, with a garden of wild flowers between

them. Often one horse and two wheels travel on a plane a couple of feet above that on which the other horse and wheels move, and the shock when sides change is unnerving. When the ruts become so deep that traffic is impossible, the peasants go a little wider afield and make a new detour, so that in places where the ground was soft we sometimes found six or seven puzzling tracks branching out like the ribs of an open fan, but all leading at last to the same goal.

Travelling in a springless cart by roads of this kind, through dreary waterless solitudes, in the height of summer—weary, hungry, dusty, roasted in the sun, my mouth so dry that conversation was impossible—I often wished myself anywhere but in Bulgaria, and wondered fretfully what devil had made me prefer such a venture, when I might have been dwelling comfortably in the Vice-Consulate at Varna. And then, perhaps, the plain would dip unexpectedly into a little dell, where were tall shady trees and green grass, and a long low wall, at one end of which was a higher and more monumental part—very simple and dignified, but marvellously cheering. As half-dead a moment

before, our spirits rose suddenly, and all the gaiety of life surged again within us; for hence flowed a jet of cold, pure, crystal-clear water, filling a series of stone cattle-troughs that ran the whole length of the wall. In such oases we would pause for our meals and a short sleep in the welcome shade, the horses would be fed, and even Grivei would rush forward, barking gladly, to slake his thirst and cool his feet in the stream. Those only who have suffered the parched throat and burning lips can know the heartfelt thanks with which such a sight is hailed; and all such will join me in blessing, not western civilization, not the Bulgarian government, not even a water company or a sanitary board, but the despised Turk. The devotion of a just part of a man's wealth to religious and charitable purposes is a constantly reiterated and piously observed principle of Islam, and the construction and endowment of fountains *(tsheshmes)* is one of the most admirable expressions of Turkish munificence. Years ago some benevolent Mohammedan, passing this spot, had needed to drink, and discovered the spring. Out of gratitude to the Giver of all good things he had raised and endowed this

gracious monument, in order that his fellow-men might the better enjoy the same blessing, and the faithful have water for their ablutions. The same hand that erected the fountain for the traveller, planted also the trees to shelter him from the scorching rays of the sun, and gave the surrounding land to provide pasture for his horses. Above the point from which flows the limpid and precious stream is, generally, a modest panel of white marble, on which is graven, in delicate Arabic script, perhaps the name of the donor, which no wayfarer could read without respectful gratitude, or perhaps a verse from the Koran. It was with anger almost amounting to fury that, over and over again, I found these little recording tablets lying broken on the ground, purposely removed and defaced by that far less admirable race to whom the Turks once taught a very necessary lesson in charity, piety, and cleanliness.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE ON THE ROADS.

After leaving the camp at Indzhe-Kiöi, we followed the banks of the lake Devna and the stream which feeds it, travelling inland until we reached a glass-factory and a few cottages just before Gebedzhe, but on the opposite side of the little river. We had filled a large sack with good grass and dandelion leaves for the horses, but though it was then six o'clock, I had had no dinner, nor indeed anything to eat except a morsel of bread and some raw garlic. Feeling hungry, I paused with old Petrika at the khan to drink beer, eat sausages, and buy sweets for the child, before joining the others at the camping-place. It was a piece of waste ground by the roadside, covered with thin grass and sparse bushes, littered with rags, tins, and rubbish; but not unpleasantly dirty. Turi had turned the horses out to graze, and the two women had gone to the village of Gebedzhe to

obtain food. They came back, after about an hour, with the raw material for a meal, including a stolen hen, and borrowed my knife to prepare it for the pot. During the cooking, Turi and I revisited the khan, returning to find supper ready. On the ground had been set a large plated copper tray, in the middle of which, in a metal dish, steamed a savoury stew, containing the stolen hen which I had seen alive half-an-hour earlier. It had been plucked and dressed with great care, for not a feather was visible that might have betrayed the theft. Unleavened bread had been baked, and a big piece, too hot to touch, had been placed on the tray for each of us—Petrika, Turi, and myself. The women ate apart. The *bori* (girl), Turi's wife, carried water round, "that we might wash our hands to eat bread," and after this ceremony we fell to with good appetite. First we ate the soup with wooden spoons, then we mopped up the rice and vegetables with pieces of bread, and lastly we seized in our fingers the dismembered fragments of the stolen hen and gnawed them. Both the meal and the mode of serving it were in Turkish style, and the only characteristically Gypsy circumstances were the method

of obtaining poultry and perhaps the manner of killing it. Although all the cooking is done by females, animals intended for food must be butchered by a man: the Gypsies would refuse to eat anything that had been slaughtered by a woman.

I was ashamed to find that my table deportment, compared with that of my friends, was clumsy and uncouth. The Gypsies seemed to find the thumbs and first two fingers of their left hands perfect substitutes for knives and forks, and manipulated their bread so cleverly that plates would have been superfluous. My imitative efforts were shockingly unsuccessful, and I fear that Totana, if, as was probably the case, she watched me, must have been pained by my solecisms. But my attention was fully occupied in the attempt to learn a new and difficult process of eating, and I had no time to consider the feelings of my hostess. My first trouble was that sitting cross-legged is not one of my accomplishments: the heels of my shoes get into wrong places, I find the ground unexpectedly hard, my knees rise obstructively against my wish, cramp seizes me suddenly, and I am apt to lose my balance. After strug-

COMB-MAKERS—*See Chapter II.*

gling manfully for some time, I capitulated and knelt; but my second difficulty could not be thus easily evaded. It needs perseverance and a very steady hand to convey food in a shallow wooden spoon from the distant common dish to the mouth, and in my hunger and impatience I fear I wasted the good victuals distressingly. And lastly, on the occasion of this, my first meal with the comb-makers, I was faced by the dreadful problem of the bones—as puzzling as must have been the problem of the cherry-stones to the Shah—and the question of how to gnaw. Here, however, I made an important discovery. If any creature of civilization has ever wondered why the Almighty provided him with front teeth, let him attack a tough fowl without knife or fork, and he will understand that Providence is wise. "Stolen hens are sweet," the Gypsies said; and, truly, in spite of its toughness, I think I have never enjoyed a more welcome meal.

When the remains of the food had been cleared away, *gadzhe* (Gentiles) came to stare and talk; but they did not stay long, and by nine o'clock we were all ready for bed. The tent, being regarded rather as a shelter against

rain and sun than an enclosed dwelling, was pitched only when wet weather seemed probable, and, since the night promised to be fine, we slept luxuriously under the sky, with nothing to separate us from mother-earth but thin rugs. The old couple lay in front of the *taliga*, and almost under it, Turi with his wife and child at the back, and I at a corner. I threw myself down in all my clothes—even with the *kalpak* on my head; and Turi came, in brotherly fashion, to tuck me in under my *yorgan*. Like most Gypsies, he was much afraid of thieves, and, before bidding me good-night, asked where I kept my money, instructing me to put it, with my passport, and such other valuables as I might possess, down the leg of my trousers. Then I began to count the stars, which seemed to shine with unusual splendour, and before I reached fifty I was fast asleep.

I awoke at half-past three, and putting out my hand, found that my face and my quilt were wet with heavy dew. A thick mist had risen from the lake and swamps near which we were encamped, and it was some hours before the sun dispersed it. At about a quarter-to-four the old woman arose, groaning much, as if she

were seriously ill; but she lay down about a quarter of an hour later, when the *bori* began the work of the day. I, too, fell asleep again, but got up with the rest at about six o'clock, found the *bori* sitting by a fire she had made, sewing diligently, and walked off with towels, soap, and brushes, to wash in the river, near a wooden bridge which leads from the main road to the village of Gebedzhe. This bridge must be indispensable now; yet under other conditions, less than fifty years ago, when it was built by a British engineer to facilitate the construction of the railway-line from Rustshuk to Varna, it was cut down during the first night after its completion, and the mortified builder was told that, rather than live with such easy access from the road, the villagers would burn their houses, and migrate to a less approachable spot. The Gypsies' ablutions were simpler than mine, for they contented themselves with pouring water over their hands and heads, using no soap. They also carefully rinsed their mouths and gargled, and Turi scrubbed his teeth with his thumb. Then each of us drank a tiny cup of Turkish coffee, excellent in quality, but in quantity a mockery of

breakfast, and a miserable support for the long and laborious day; the horses, which had been tethered near the waggon, were harnessed, and by seven o'clock we were jolting violently along an alleged road. It skirted a lake, but at first the mist rendered everything invisible, except a fringe of reeds, from which was heard the chorus of innumerable frogs.

We halted outside Little Pravadia, unharnessing the horses that they might eat the grass we had collected, and with an uncontrollable *nostalgie* for ham and eggs, I allowed my hopes to dwell pleasantly on the prospect of bread, and perhaps butter. I assumed, of course, that we had paused for a meal, and was dismayed to find that Petrika, more merciful to his beasts than he was to his family and myself, had no desire except to be shaved. By good fortune we found the barber's shop crowded, and I persuaded the old man to walk on, whither I much preferred, to the khan to eat a savoury breakfast with wine. The local constable gladly accepted an invitation to share our meal, and I watched, with amusement, the representative of law and order making to himself a friend of the mammon of unrighteousness,

each, no doubt, with a far-seeing eye on some future advantage. Totana and the others were left starving, and did not seem to mind it, for the Gypsies follow the old Turkish rule, and eat only once a day, generally after sunset, though they sometimes tempered their abstemiousness to my western voracity by munching crusts in the forenoon, or calling at khans for supplementary food.

Breakfast finished, we returned to the *taliga*, and resumed our journey by rather better roads over the great plains. Our custom was to sit on the cart and drive, sometimes furiously, if the road ran level or downhill. When we went uphill, Turi, his wife, and I used to walk ; and occasionally, towards evening, the old couple would take a long stroll by themselves. As we were driving steadily across one of the wide tablelands, a yellow wagtail ran for some distance in front of the waggon. Petrika touched me with his whip, pointed to the bird, and said it would bring great good luck. I was much interested, because between wagtails and vagabonds there used to be, in the minds of the ancients, an association which was transferred by mediæval scholars to Gypsies, when

the Gypsies became familiar objects of scholarly speculation in Europe. Three centuries before Christ, Greek poets quoted the κίγκλος as an emblem of poverty; and, three centuries after Christ, Italian peasants used the same word as a nickname for tramps. Later, a mediæval poet applied the metaphor to himself, lamenting that, weary of the life of a *cinclus*, he longed to be a snail, with a house of his own. Modern naturalists have allotted the title *cinclus* to the water-ouzel, but the older writers seem always to have taken it to mean the wagtail, generally the water-wagtail; and in those happy times of irresponsible etymology, when the study of language was less a scientific discipline than an imaginative romance, they sought to derive the race-name *Cingarus*, "Gypsy," from the bird. If this derivation wanted truth, it possessed at least a certain appropriateness, for its supporters gave credit to an unfounded legend which makes the wagtail a homeless wanderer, too feeble to build a nest for itself. Some of them pointed out, in triumphant corroboration, that it is also, like the Gypsies, restless and poor of plumage: they might have clinched their argument by adding, what Shakespeare knew, that it is pert.

The vagaries of the learned would be of little interest, were it not that in western Europe the Gypsies themselves claim the water-wagtail as their own. Both in Germany and Great Britain it is called the Gypsy bird *(Romano tshiriklo)*, and honoured above all other feathered fowl. In an unpublished essay, Mr. Engelbert Wittich, a German Gypsy, who has, by his writings, done more than any other Gypsy author to elucidate the customs and superstitions of his tribe, depicts the joy with which his brethren hail the appearance of a water-wagtail, sure precursor of a lucky day, during which success will attend them in all their undertakings. To scare such a visitor, or attempt to do it the slightest injury, is counted a serious crime, and punished severely. By wagging its tail with energy, a single bird warns the Gypsies that other travellers, not of Gypsy blood, are near at hand; but if several run hither and thither in the camp, or on the road, it is a sign that Gypsies will be met, probably friends or relations. The English Gypsies, as is well known, have a similar tradition, and believe that the appearance of a water-wagtail foretells a meeting with other Gypsies, kinsfolk

or strangers, according as it flies, or does not fly away. They have variants, also, which do not ring genuine, but sound a *gadzho* (Gentile) rather than a Gypsy note, borrowings, perhaps, or superstitions misapplied. An authority on the subject records that the Gypsy lad who kills one of these birds, is said to be sure to have a lady for his sweetheart; and an old woman, a member of the Heron family, remarked to me reflectively, when a wagtail was fearlessly haunting the neighbourhood of her tent: "Dere's someone a-thinking of me werry hard."

Thus it was pleasant to find that, at the opposite end of Europe, the Gypsy bird was still held in respect by the Gypsies as a fortunate omen, and I awaited with interest the luck which the wagtail should bring.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LUCK OF THE WAGTAIL.

As we approached the village of Yasî-Tepe, near which the comb-makers winter in houses, we saw, out on the plain, a great horse- and cattle-fair in progress. Petrika quickened the pace instinctively, passing without remark a camp of spoon-makers *(roiari)*. We had already met a tribe of similar Gypsies on the road: I believe they possessed donkeys, but they travelled in long waggons covered with matting and drawn by buffaloes; and the women were distinguished by great brass clasps at the waist. I saw them, however, but for a moment as we passed, and had no time to study them carefully. The tribe is numerous in north-eastern Bulgaria, and I had examined at closer quarters a poorer company which visited Varna. On the plain to the north of the town, far from Osman's *mahala*, they had turned their seven donkeys out to graze, and pitched three very small tents, which they moved frequently, according to the direction of the wind. The party

consisted of an old woman, three young women, an unmarried girl, three men, a lad, about ten children, and a baby which was generally slung in a hammock-cradle in one of the tents. A soldier in khaki uniform often worked with them; but whether he belonged to the family or came from the barracks, which were quite near, I never ascertained. It was difficult to communicate with them, for, although they were dark and Gypsy-like, they denied their race and did not understand Romani, using Rumanian among themselves. They made spindles, wooden spoons, large wooden ladles, troughs, and little wheels or pulleys the use of which I did not discover, labouring early and late with exemplary diligence, and a man could produce a hundred spoons in a day. The women were usually employed in hawking their wares in the town, though the girl often took a turn at one of the lathes. Of these they had three; curiously primitive instruments, in using which the power is supplied by sawing with a kind of bow, the string of which is wound round the object to be turned. When selling in the town they bargained, but at the tents they had fixed prices for their goods, neither bargaining nor

asking more than they were willing to accept. For spindles and spoons they charged about the same price: thirty centimes for five. A big wooden ladle cost sixty centimes; and a trough, made of wood hardened by burning, two francs.

Immediately after passing the spoon-makers' camp, Petrika, the old lady, and I dismounted and made off across the plain, leaving Turi to take the *taliga* to a halting-place. We found the business of the fair almost at an end; the horses which had changed owners were being led away, while the dealers crowded the canvas booths where food and drink were sold, talking excitedly. Except for the flatness of the land and the absence of trees and hedges, the scene closely resembled a great British fair, such as that which is held every autumn in the open country at Brough Hill; the Yasî-Tepe gathering was, however, much smaller, the costumes brighter in colour, and I saw far more drunkenness — dozens of intoxicated and unconscious Bulgarians were being pitched headlong into the carts which were to take them home. Turi arrived soon, but he and his father met so many friends that I was left to sit rather disconso-

lately on a bench in a beer-booth. Gypsies were plentiful, and all took me for one of Petrika's numerous sons or sons-in-law; becoming much interested when the nature of my journey was explained. I learned that Gypsies are not the only thieves in Bulgaria, for I was introduced to a singular character, a purely *gadzho* (Gentile) horse-dealer who spoke fluent Romani, and must have been involved in the illicit branch of his trade, since he gave Turi, as baksheesh for help in some past transaction, a long and gorgeous cigarette-holder of amber, ivory, and ebony inlaid with silver. The Gypsies described him as very wealthy, and I believe he was mayor of a neighbouring village—I found him genial. He accompanied us to our camp on the edge of the village, and shared our meal—this time lamb, bought at the fair; not stolen poultry. Then we packed up and proceeded on our way, passing as usual round the outside of the village, not through it, probably for the purpose of escaping the attention of the police. It had been a pleasant experience, and the wagtail had vindicated its reputation.

We made a second halt late in the afternoon, at a village where, according to Petrika, there

was a small Gypsy quarter. I have forgotten its name, and was much too tired to visit the *mahala*, but threw myself at once on the ground and slept. Petrika, however, had resolved to attempt the impossible task of reaching Shumla that night, and I was soon roused in order that the journey might be resumed. Dreadfully fatigued I dozed in my place, and had to be frequently awakened in case I should fall from the *taliga*. And then occurred the only incident which gave me any anxiety during the whole journey. Waking suddenly from half-slumber, I found the Gypsies in the middle of an eager conversation, and the words which fell on my ear were, "We will not kill *(mar-)* him to-morrow." I started into complete consciousness at once. If they were not going to kill me to-morrow, evidently they intended to do so the day after, or at some later date. What was I to do? Was Osman's prophecy about to be fulfilled? The Gypsies had revolvers; I was unarmed. I thought of running away; but, with the railways suspended, I should have had to run far. I considered casting myself on the protection of the police; but how was I to explain the case to them, knowing neither

Bulgarian nor Turkish? And so, in the end, I dozed off again, preferring the evils I knew to the evils I knew not of; or, at least, prepared to reconsider the matter during the day of life the Gypsies had allowed me.

At nightfall we reached a modern village called Kaspitshan—one street with a few shops and khans, a railway station, a market-building, and a factory of some kind. It was an unpleasant place, and we camped, or rather settled, for the tent was not spread, on the most unpleasant part of it—the market-place, littered with offal and stones, and smelling of cattle. We were all terribly tired—too tired to make a fire, or cook, or do anything except drag out the mats and prepare to sleep. Old Petrika apparently took pity on me, for he invited me to a khan and gave me a halfpenny cup of coffee—surely an unnecessary kindness if he intended to murder me two days afterwards. And, when we returned, Turi was sympathetic and attentive, and I went with him to another khan to drink *rakia* (spirits), and to a shop to buy sardines and bread in order that we might not go to bed starving. When we brought the food to the waggon the women were evidently pleased,

COMB-MAKERS' CAMP AT INDZHE-KIÖI—*See Chapter II.*

and ate merrily. And then, as I watched the stars and awaited the oblivion of sleep, I reflected that *mar-* can be used metaphorically, and has other meanings besides "kill," so that probably the Gypsies meant nothing worse than that they would not *over-fatigue* me on the next day.

We rose at a quarter to four and started breakfastless at a quarter past, glad to leave so unwholesome a pitch. About two hours after starting we halted at a high grassy place by the roadside, within sight of Shumla, and ate bread dipped in oil from the sardines we had had for supper; but it was a short halt, and at about a quarter to eight we reached the outskirts of the town. The horses were unharnessed and turned out to graze on a large tract of waste land, covered as usual with rubbish and rags, while the *bori* baked bread. Her method was one which is used also by peasants in Bulgaria, and is by no means a lengthy operation. A large, round, cushion-shaped slab of dough is hastily kneaded on the metal tray which serves for table at meals, and is then placed on a circular sheet of iron, slightly cupped. The iron and dough are set on the wood fire, and red-hot ashes heaped

upon them, nothing protecting the bread from burning. The result, if slightly heavy, is by no means unpalatable, though much blackened superficially in the process. It is eaten fresh and hot—so hot that it is difficult to touch it.

In the meantime, before the meal was ready, Turi and I took the two horses to be shod—a necessary precaution, because we were, in future, to travel much by metalled roads, and less than previously by country tracks of bare earth. Turi led them, while I followed behind with a whip which, doubtful as to what would be the effect of its application on the horse called *dillo*, I was afraid to use. Unfortunately the day was a holiday; all the shops were shut, and it was some time before we found, with the help of the old couple who had joined us, a smith willing to work. Holidays and days of abstinence used to be observed religiously in Bulgaria. Of the latter there are one hundred and eighty-three when, even now, it is sometimes almost impossible to buy anything to eat or drink in Christian villages. Since all the rest of the year is made up of feast-days, half a Bulgar's life consists of fasts when he may scarcely eat, and the other half of festivals when he dare not

work. The strictness of this ridiculous piety must have been somewhat relaxed, or even such progress as Bulgaria has made would have been impossible. In the end we persuaded a blacksmith to commit sin—or perform a work of necessity and mercy—and four shoes were put on at a cost of two francs, Totana taking baksheesh surreptitiously in the form of a useful long rod. Turi then returned to the *taliga*, while Petrika and I, after being shaved and having our hair cut, set out with the old lady to see the town—an important place, although uninteresting and over-modernized. I bought a large supply of cherries, and drank a couple of glasses of beer; refusing to eat, because I knew that a meal was in preparation at the waggon.

It was, therefore, a disappointment when Petrika led us out of the town by a different and very steep road, and I found that he had ordered the cart to await us about a mile away. It was broiling hot and terribly dusty, and the cherries, although comforting, were a poor substitute for the meal we had missed. Petrika, as usual, had set his heart on an impossible feat—the reaching of Razgrad that night. So we drove furiously through country where, at last, a few

trees were to be seen, and across plains which were not quite so drearily flat as those of the first days of our journey. The heat and the dust were almost insufferable, I was intensely thirsty and almost faint for want of food, and at last I had to beg him to stop. Accordingly we halted on the common of the village of Kabakula, littered as usual with filth and rubbish, but abundantly provided with sticks for our fire. A meal was cooked. To my horror, there was no coffee ; the supply had run short. Evidently we had passed beyond the wagtail's sphere of influence : nothing was going right. Unreasonably blaming old Petrika, who, though excellent in many ways, was a somewhat tame companion, I made up my mind to take, in future, such walks as our unnecessary haste permitted with Turi, to whom I was gradually becoming attached. So I proposed that he and I should go to quench our thirst in the village. For some unknown reason the other Gypsies conspired to put obstacles in our way. It was a Mohammedan village, they said, and there was no khan there, not even a café. However, we went in spite of all objections ; and although the first thing I saw was a Christian church, it was nevertheless

true that the place boasted no place of entertainment. We asked everywhere whether any villager would sell us beer, wine, or *rakia;* but since none could, or would, I suggested cherries, and we found at last a man, in the immaculate white linen garb of a Rumanian peasant, who agreed to supply our want.

Kabakula is built in the Turkish style—no houses are visible: only high walls, over which trees suggest pleasant gardens within, and great roofed gates. Through one of these we passed, and found ourselves in an enclosure, partly farm-yard, partly garden, round which were ranged various buildings, all of one storey. The owner invited us to sit on chairs in a spotlessly clean kitchen, roofed, indeed, but open on two sides to the air, its floor covered with matting. A maiden was making butter in an old-fashioned wooden churn, and we begged the butter-milk. She consented, and we waited until the butter was made, and then drank two large bowls each; and extraordinarily refreshing it was after our arduous day. The neatness, simplicity and extreme cleanliness of everything, including the peasants' clothes, the rooms, and the utensils, was very striking. As

we sat, cattle and buffaloes came to the door, pushed it open with their heads, and walked unattended to their own appointed places. Before we went we paid a small sum, and were dismissed with many good wishes, and a great load of little sweet white cherries. The peasant was interested in my journey. He had even heard of England, but only as the place whence come criminals who burgle banks.

As we returned to the camp we passed the village wells, at which were assembled all the youth of the place, lads and maidens, in dazzlingly white raiment, rendered brighter by splashes of red and yellow. They were drawing water for the cattle, and talking gaily the while. It was a pleasant picture to recall mentally as I lay that night awaiting sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

MARKET-DAY AT RAZGRAD.

The last two days had been too strenuous for me, and I awoke at dawn feeling much depressed. My journey seemed a failure: I was learning nothing, and was not even a spectator of the normal life of the comb-makers. We travelled so rapidly that conversation was impossible; and, when we halted, fatigue prohibited any serious attempt at inquiry or investigation. The excursion was costly; and I was not even enjoying myself. Without getting up I wrote a melancholy note to the Vice-Consul at Varna, and watched Gina lighting her morning fire—a useless ceremony, as it seemed, for nothing was ever cooked upon it. And as I watched and fretted inwardly, the village hens strolled out upon the common, seeking food, pecking here and there, and advancing gradually until they approached our camp. One, more daring than the rest, ventured within reach of the *bori's* hand as she

sat sewing by her aimless fire, and I was wondering, sleepily, what she had cast on the ground to tempt it, and why hens were so foolish, when there was a sudden motion of that hand—quick as the movement of a chameleon's tongue when he catches a fly; there was a stifled clucking, and the bird was no longer visible, though Gina continued her occupation as if nothing had happened. And all that day occasional muffled sounds revealed the presence of a hen somewhere in the *taliga*, and these sounds ceased only about an hour before our meal, which consisted of boiled fowl.

We left Kabakula betimes, and, halting only to eat dry bread and collect grass for the horses, reached Razgrad about six. The gilded domes of its mosques, and their slender minarets, gave the little town an enchanting appearance, as we drove round the outskirts in search of a camp-site. We found one at last, and not a bad one, with good grazing; but, as usual, next door to the public refuse-heap and town-midden. We were on the windward side, however, and its proximity mattered little, although it made the first part of our walk to town somewhat unpleasant. Petrika, Turi, and I left the camp

almost immediately and went sight-seeing. It was market-day. Perhaps this was the explanation of our forced marches; for Razgrad was the pleasantest and greenest place I found in north-eastern Bulgaria, and it could never look more attractive than when crowded with brightly dressed peasants. I like to think that, perhaps, the Gypsies knew I would be pleased, and hurried to reach it in time. They said nothing of the sort. Gypsies do not pour out their æsthetic emotions in cataracts of vain words, but they were keenly appreciative of beauty in every form, and they had arranged to spend the whole day at Razgrad. After the fatigue and monotony of our race through the plains, I found the animation of our repose in this delightful town amazingly refreshing, and our day there compensated for all previous discomforts.

Even Gypsy families have their misfortunes, but they can endure them more patiently than *gadzhe*, who are apt to be distressed less by the misfortunes themselves than by the anxious necessity for keeping up appearances. One of Turi's sisters was then in prison at Varna, and her husband Ivan was simultaneously confined

at Razgrad for the crime of horse-stealing. Family affection being one of the strongest elements of the Gypsy character, it was natural that, before going to enjoy ourselves in the town, we should pay a visit of sympathy at the gaol. But we were too early, and were told to return in an hour; so we strolled on past the stately Turkish clock-tower, past the magnificent Turkish baths, as far as the market-square. Razgrad has been but slightly modernized, and the market, too, was Turkish in character, despite the ridiculous Bulgarian lamp-post, in the form of a female figure, which disgraces it. A protest must be made, also, against the tasteless chauvinism which dictated the removal of the Turkish inscription from a graceful kiosk or fountain in another part of the town, and the substitution of a fourpenny oleograph of King Ferdinand in a gilt frame. The jostling crowd and the gaudy clothes in full sunlight made a brilliant picture; and everywhere there were gay little tables where sweetmeats were sold, and larger stalls bearing huge glass vases of red and yellow sherbet. Vendors of cooling drinks walked about shouting, and carrying by much-studded leather thongs enormous brass amphoræ

which tinkled and glittered with ornaments and beads. A dull-looking man, with a portable harmonium, was singing endless songs to an appreciative audience, and on the ground were displayed agricultural implements and tools of iron, all hand made, with much crockery roughly but effectively decorated.

Threading our way through the dense throng, we entered a small khan, dark and cool, to drink tea and *rakia* (spirits); coffee they did not sell. The khan was full of Gypsies, and my companions were immediately involved in an animated exchange of family news and gossip, while I was introduced as a sort of curiosity; but a curiosity who might be trusted. Here as elsewhere, among both Gypsies and *gadzhe*, people marvelled that I neither spoke nor wished to speak Bulgarian and Turkish, and the wonder of the Gypsies was mixed with approval. That I should choose to travel in such company was not to them remarkable, for all assumed that I was myself some kind of a Gypsy—a native of the kingdom—an inhabitant of *Romanipe* (the empire of the Roms), which is just as real as *Xorixanipe* (the empire of the Turks), or any other territorial nation. But

that I should have come to Bulgaria to see the *Roma* (Gypsies), depending only upon an imperfect knowledge of Romani, won their admiration. From the shady khan we came out into the dazzling sunlight to do our shopping. I needed a couple of additions to my wardrobe—underclothing, and a second girdle to make my waist less conspicuous, for waists are considered unmanly. Petrika, too, professed to want a new *kalpak* (cap); visited many shops, examined, priced, and tried on what they had. I think he expected me to pay for it, but as I made no offer he made no purchase; and at last, while he was talking to an acquaintance in the street, Turi and I shook the tiresome old gentleman off and escaped alone. We behaved like children released from school. First we sought out a small restaurant and ate an excellent breakfast. Then we went arm-in-arm and bought presents: a dark kerchief for Totana; a yellow kerchief and a green striped quilted jacket for Turi's *bori*, and sweetmeats for his child—sugar necklaces and pastry horses. And meanwhile we were planning what we should do in the afternoon. Turi was shaved and had his hair cut *alla Turca*—that is, trim-

med back with a razor, so as to give his forehead the admired geometrical outline—and all too soon it was time to find Petrika and return to the prison gate.

From the outside the gaol looked like a row of shops with their iron shutters down. In the middle there was an arched carriage-way, closed by large doors which did not seem particularly strong, and near it a sentry dozed in his box. Knocking boldly, we asked for Ivan, and were immediately admitted, without examination or inquiry, under the archway, which was guarded at its inner end by a light wooden wicket. I had expected to find forbidding blocks of buildings within, massive masonry, barred windows, paved yards, stern janitors in uniform, and the extreme discomfort of exaggerated order. What I actually saw beyond the wicket, framed in the arch of the cool *porte-cochère*, was a rather wild garden surrounded by low one-storied buildings, among them a carpenter's workshop from which the clean odour of fresh-sawn wood reached us, mingled with the scent of flowers. For in the centre of the little square were noble shade-trees and tall bushes of red roses. There was none of the severity usually associated with prisons,

and, to judge by appearances, none of the security. It was, in fact, difficult to understand why the prisoners stayed there, unless the life within was pleasanter than life outside. And certainly Ivan, when he arrived, seemed singularly contented. His hair was not cut short, and he wore decent, comfortable khaki clothes. He greeted us cheerfully, and brought three chairs on which we sat, talking much and merrily, while the gaoler waited on us, bringing coffee on a tray and refilling our cups when they were empty. While we were chatting, another Gypsy prisoner crossed the yard—perhaps one should say garden—and, called by Petrika, joined our happy little party. His crime, too, was horse-stealing. Presently his friends, male and female, to the number of seven, also arrived, and the solitary gaoler inside, with the single sentry outside, were in such a hopeless minority that I asked Turi why, in heaven's name, the prisoners did not knock them down and escape. He could not explain the reason clearly. I think it was simply that their imprisonment was kismet, and that it would be useless, or wicked, to resist fate; but as Ivan was a member of a gang which had

stolen thirty horses, he at least could well afford to take and enjoy the three years' rest which a kindly government had recommended. I gave him one franc, which was the sum Turi modestly suggested, doubtless as a token of goodwill rather than a useful gift; paid for the coffee at the ordinary rate, a halfpenny a cup; and with much hand-shaking and many benedictions we passed out.

On returning to the camp we found that the tent had been pitched, but that, the wind having changed, it was facing the wrong quarter. It was, accordingly, moved bodily round like the head of a windmill, the women lifting the two arch-poles in front, while Turi wheeled the *taliga*, and the back of the tent which it supported, in the required direction. Turi suggested that we should put on clean linen and visit the Turkish bath, and we went behind the tent to change. Noticing that Turi's shirt was somewhat ragged, I gave him one of mine. His gratitude was almost overwhelming, and seemed, at the time, to be out of all relation to the value of the gift. For some reason this by no means gorgeous garment, flung casually at a young man who evidently needed it, was appre-

ciated far more highly than the gifts I had that very morning bought specially for the Gypsies. Almost a year afterwards, when correcting the proofs of a Romani folk-tale, one of the bewitching series dictated to Mr. Gilliat-Smith by Gypsies in Sofia, I read that when the forty-one thieves return to their den and find that the heroine has sought refuge there, they promise that she shall come to no harm, and in order that their promise may be binding, each thief successively makes the girl put on his shirt. The ceremony, known also, as Mr. Gilliat-Smith informs us, to the Syrian Arabs, symbolizes the assumption of the responsibilities and privileges of brotherhood. By giving Turi my shirt I had unwittingly, but in a manner more delicate, more engaging, and more romantic than a mere declaration would have been, accepted him as my brother. Turi was greatly delighted, but the collar-stud puzzled him, and several times afterwards, when dressing, he came to me to have it fastened.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TURKISH BATH.

My memory paints the Turkish bath as a huge Byzantine cathedral; but, living in a little tent, I doubtless carried with me from Razgrad, itself quite a small place, an exaggerated impression, and probably the building is really no greater than a church. Though I have doubts about its size, I have none about the noble dignity of this relic of Turkish civilization—or of an older and more splendid civilization still; for the Moslems, disciplined by the healthful mandates of their ritual, have alone treasured ancient Rome's bequest. Under Ottoman government every Balkan town, no matter how insignificant, had its public *hammam*, every house its private bath—from the simple cabinet attached to one of the rooms in the dwellings of the poor, to the luxurious suites of chambers adapted to the same purpose in those of the wealthy. Following the advent of Christian rulers in the Near East, cleanliness, an easily dispensable adjunct of Christianity, gradually

vanished, and godliness with it. The baths at Belgrade have disappeared; the great *hammam* at Philippopoli was converted into a meeting-house for the National Assembly; and the villas which successful merchants build at Varna are without bathrooms. In Razgrad the bath still occupies a central and conspicuous position in the old Turkish town, where its simple yet stately architecture is a fitting memorial of Turkish virtues which Bulgarians have jettisoned in the pursuit of what they flatter themselves is progress. In revenge they have built on the heights, as a utilitarian emblem, a commonplace modern school of large dimensions, whose many windows gape without sympathy or understanding at the monument of idealism below.

The bath contains two principal apartments, of which the first, the dressing-and-cooling-room, is a square domed chamber with rings of little circular lights in the massive roof. Round it, on a higher level than the floor, are lattice-work cubicles furnished with couches, and in the centre a graceful fountain makes pleasant music. The main bathroom is similarly vaulted and lighted, but considerably larger, and main-

PETRIKA'S TENT—*See Chapter III.*

tained at a high temperature by flues in the walls and floor. On the floor, and among the slabs which form the central table or platform, are several fine pieces of ancient marble; but the walls are whitewashed and rather dirty. There are two smaller and hotter rooms, and white marble basins, each with taps of hot and cold water, are fixed at intervals round the walls. At the corners, supporting the cupola, is seen the characteristic corbel-work of Moslem architecture.

All classes, even the poorest, frequent the baths, and Turi, although nominally Christian, was no stranger to them; but he was unaccustomed to being a first-class bather, with a shampooer to tend him. The people of the bath, too, must have been surprised by our visit, and, having doubts about our ability to pay, sent a boy to tell us the price, before sending the shampooer himself. They did not lay out mats for us on the marble platform, so we went direct to the hottest room and crouched against the damp, warm walls. The place was full of mysterious echoes, haunted by whispers, and extraordinarily picturesque. In the dim light that fell gently through the moist air from

the little glazed holes that studded the cupola, Turi's dark and muscular body seemed to be an ancient bronze statue that had been part of the building ever since the good Turks reared it in the centre of their town, between the mosques, houses of God, to be a temple of cleanliness, temperance, and health. And Turi, as he sat there, magnificent in his nakedness, head bowed, hands clasping his knees, might well have been the genius of the place, mourning that the present generation of Bulgar Christians have done nothing to preserve its beauty and protect it from decay, except to add a despicable wooden paygate at the main entrance.

Wherever Gypsies are found, two main types of face can be recognized: the one aristocratic and distinguished by a large, high-bridged or aquiline nose; the other characterized by a smaller nose, broader at the base, less finely moulded, and straight or even slightly concave. Turi's features followed the second, less handsome model, but his expression was bright, manly, and intelligent, and he beamed with the benevolence and kindness that are born of perfect health in the open air. His skin wanted the coppery sheen that one often sees with

Gypsies, but it had a rich mat velvety surface, the dark equivalent of a child's "peach-bloom"; and his body and limbs, though muscular, were gracefully proportioned. And after the shampooer had scrubbed and soaped us, when the Gypsy stood under the great vault, pouring warm water over himself from a silvered cup, it seemed as though one of the three thousand statues which were erected at Olympia to commemorate athletes, had been discovered, and I found it difficult to refrain from touching him to feel whether he was really bronze. If ever, in secret or unconsciously, I had censured Turi for the sins of his tribe, resentment faded at that moment, and I knew that, to one who could be so beautiful, much must be forgiven—even horse-stealing.

After the bath we returned to the market-place, and Turi, like a dutiful husband, began to lament that Gina, instead of enjoying herself with us, was wearying in her stepmother-in-law's company. So I sent him to the tent to fetch her, while I waited in a café. My solitude was not altogether dull. The attendant insisted on talking to me in Bulgarian, and refused to believe that I could not understand him, even when I placed a finger on my forehead, made

an idiotic face, and tried to indicate dumbness by rattling my tongue in my mouth. A young farmer, who had returned from Canada to fight, and had been invalided from the front, came bravely to my rescue, but, by reason of his amazingly imperfect knowledge of English, only made matters worse; and just as I was becoming a little anxious, and all three of us were beginning to lose our tempers, Turi re-appeared with his *bori*. Wearing her new kerchief and jacket, with Totana's embroidered apron, and the gold coin from her neck, she looked extremely handsome, and we walked proudly through the streets to place ourselves like bank-holiday excursionists in the rather maladroit hands of a photographic artist. It was then only two o'clock; but Turi, overcome, perhaps, by the unaccustomed quantity of wine he had drunk, suddenly declared that it was imperatively necessary that he should sleep, and insisted on hiring rooms. My efforts to dissuade him were fruitless; but lodgings were difficult to find, and Turi difficult to satisfy, and it was only after much vacillation that two bedrooms were engaged at the little khan we had visited when we first entered the town. They were in a

separate building at the far end of the yard, and by no means uncomfortable; but, thinking it folly to waste time thus, I protested that I did not wish to rest, and that the bed appeared to be dirty. Turi, however, insisted; so I lay down in my clothes and, in spite of my protests, was soon sleeping soundly.

In less than an hour I awoke, and found Turi sitting patiently on my pillow, waiting to tell me that Gina had gone home. Refreshed by our nap we left the khan, and were almost immediately stopped and addressed by an old Gypsy couple who, at parting, pronounced elaborate benedictions for the benefit, not only of ourselves, but also of our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and I know not what other more distant relations. This interview reminded me that I ought to visit the Gypsy quarter. Turi did not know where it was, but, after inquiring the way, we found it, not where one would have expected, at the back of a public midden, but at the top of the hill, on the outskirts of the town, which borders it on one side, while clean fresh country begins immediately beyond it. Though a very small *mahala*, it was by far the pleasantest I saw in

the Balkans. The little houses, planted with extreme irregularity, and not, as is more usual, arranged in a straight road, were neatly built and plastered, and prettily painted. Some were surrounded by enclosures, in which grew roses and other flowering plants, and here and there a great tree gave welcome shade. The Gypsies were hospitable. We were invited to sit under the wide veranda of a hut, while the inhabitants squatted at a slightly lower level in the narrow lane in front. They made coffee for us, and we, in return, sent a boy to fetch *rakia*, which all drank with great ceremony. One man, apparently a true Gypsy, spoke no Romani; and, amid the laughter of the tribe, I did my best to revile him in the language he could not understand. A tiny baby was produced for admiration, and when I promised to be godfather on the next day, the young mother appeared and kissed our hands reverently. To my surprise she wore bloomers; and afterwards, when we related the incident to Totana, the old lady declared that these Gypsies were Mohammedans, and that to lend ourselves as aiders and abettors of the christening ceremony would be to commit a sin.

This set me wondering what could be the motive which made these Gypsies wish to have the baby christened. I knew, of course, that an illicit use has often been made of the sacrament by superstitious people, so that, for instance, the ecclesiastical authorities of Magdeburg, in 1652, were obliged to forbid parents to adorn their offspring with corals, pearls, gold or silver beads, and such like gauds, in the belief that the trinkets, by sharing the children's baptism, would acquire magical virtue. Moreover, in Turkey, the Mohammedans, suspecting that the rite contained an element of good, used sometimes to have their boys baptized secretly, as is recounted by Busbequius, who lived in the sixteenth century. Gypsies pick up popular superstitions no less eagerly than they pick up hens, and it is actually recorded that, in the year 1625, Maddalena di Mariano, an Italian Gypsy, possessed a baptized loadstone which she prized above rubies. But the learned in Gypsy customs have generally sought for some benefit more tangible than a vague enchantment as the reason for Gypsy love of christenings. Even in 1483 Felix Schmid complained that, although they derided its ritual, Gypsies were

anxious to reap the advantages of Christianity, and had their children baptized and re-baptized. Dr. Weissenbruch made a similar protest in 1727, insinuating that they found christenings profitable, doubtless by reason of generous gifts from the sponsors. Borrow foolishly suggested that they were principally influenced by a desire to enjoy the privilege of burial in consecrated ground—a privilege to which the least sophisticated Gypsies are most indifferent. Some Romany tribes still seize every opportunity to have their infants repeatedly baptized; but, though the custom has been known for four centuries, its explanation is still to seek—a striking example of the mystery in which Gypsies have wrapped their life, in order that they may dwell in our midst and yet remain a people apart.

Leaving the *mahala*, we found on its outskirts a single tent of white sacking, near which a woman was washing clothes. Her baby hung in a hammock-cradle, and an older child, curiously fair for a Gypsy, was playing near the camp. The husband detained us for a few moments to talk and to drink sugarless coffee, and we passed on down the hill. We had scarcely

reached the centre of the town, when a drenching thunder-shower drove us into a restaurant. It was full of schoolboys, who, like the waiter, addressed me in Bulgarian, and were somewhat suspicious when I failed to answer. Turi explained my errand, and they fired off at me what scraps of English, French and German they possessed, much pleased at the opportunity, and by no means disconcerted when they could not understand my replies. They were amiable lads, full of fun and laughter, and their attentions enlivened our meal. By the time we had satisfied our hunger the rain had ceased, and we stepped out into the muddy street to return to our home near the rubbish-heaps. As we picked our way, we heard behind us the chorus of a body of men, and drew aside to watch a detachment of soldiers march to the station, thence to proceed to the Servian frontier. First came about eighty men in old khaki uniforms but without rifles, and then about two hundred peasants in their working dress, also unarmed. All were singing, but rather, it seemed to me, by command of their non-commissioned officers than from any spontaneous enthusiasm: they appeared to be almost as dejected as a party of

three hundred Turkish prisoners of war I had seen pass the same spot that afternoon. While we watched, old Petrika and his wife, sulky at having been so long deserted, found us, and I tried to pacify them by giving them money and sending them to buy corn for the horses.

We were standing outside a Turkish café, much the same as Osman's, through the open windows of which I could see the dignified customers sitting placidly crosslegged. The whole contents, furniture and utensils. cannot have been worth more than a pound, and no attempt had been made to ornament the walls; yet the little room sufficed for the happiness of the Mohammedans who frequented it and spent on coffee and tobacco, during a whole pleasant evening, perhaps the sum of fourpence. It was as typical of the temperance and frugality of Islam as are the plate-glass, coloured tiles, carved wood, vulgar decoration, polished metal —and drunkenness—in our taverns, of the feverish luxury of a western civilization, which denies its slaves time for thought, kindness or reflection. We entered and seated ourselves, sipping our tiny cups with enjoyment. But we were not long allowed to forget that western

civilization which seemed so distant: there was suddenly the sound of firearms, with a mad rush of horses, and the officers of the detachment we had just seen drove past at breakneck speed, supremely drunk, rolling about in the carriages, and firing their revolvers recklessly in the air. Sad must be the lot of troops under such commanders: I felt glad that I was sitting in a Turkish café, and not in a Bulgarian restaurant.

That night we went contentedly to bed in the tent soon after nine o'clock, but not before we had eaten a supper of which the most important element was the stolen hen.

CHAPTER IX.

GYPSY BLACKSMITHS.

After so eventful a day, it was to be expected that we should oversleep ourselves, and we did not rise until five o'clock. Turi and I went at once, breakfastless, into the town, intending to take a carriage to the *mahala* and redeem our promise to assist a Moslem baby to obtain the superstitious advantages of Christian baptism. We paused to drink a cup of coffee, but were obliged to walk the whole way, no carriages being out at so early an hour. The Gypsies, I think, had not expected us so soon—probably they did not really expect us at all—and we had to wait in a little yard or enclosure crowded with bushes of red roses, while the baby was being prepared for the ceremony. At last, somewhat impatient, we were called into the house. It had two scrupulously clean rooms, the floors of which were covered with matting, but there was neither furniture nor decoration. Passing through the first, we entered the second, where, in the middle of the floor, without cradle

or bed, lay the baby wrapt in a green quilt. Instructed by Turi, I placed half a franc on the matting beside it, and, lifting the little bundle, walked out of the house. The Gypsies were much amused because I did not know how to hold it, and took great pains to teach me, especially an old lady who appeared to be mistress of the ceremonies, and alone accompanied Turi and myself to the church. It was at a considerable distance: we had to descend the hill by a steep and irregular path, traverse part of the town, and cross a small river on a precarious plank-bridge. At first the baby cried a little in protest, but after a few moments it accepted the situation, smiled and made ridiculous noises to its prospective god-father. It was surprisingly heavy, and several times the old lady offered to relieve me of the burden; but, determined to do my duty to the best of my ability, I always refused. We reached the church at about half-past seven. The priest was not ready—I suspected he was still in bed—and an official informed us that we must wait at least an hour, which Turi declared to be impossible. I was disappointed, wishing to see the adventure to its end. But Turi assured me

that, in the sight of God, I was really the infant's god-father because I would pay the priest's fee; and that the child would be called Elena after my mother. I had perforce to assent, and gave the old lady six francs—three for the priest and three for a drink after the ceremony. Judging from what I saw afterwards at Rustshuk, I escaped very cheaply. Had I stayed, and had the festival been conducted without parsimony, it would have cost me several pounds.

We took a carriage back to the tent, meeting the old people on the road, and giving them a few pence to buy meat; and, after a short halt to drink pink bottled lemonade at a shop, continued our journey. Leaving the town, we passed large barracks and reached country far pleasanter than any we had previously traversed. Trees and woods were much more common; the road was metalled and sometimes bordered by fruit-trees: in parts it resembled a British lane. There were streams too, tributaries of the Lom, beside which a muddy deposit on the fields indicated that they must have risen at least six feet after the thunderstorm. Seeing a cart of hay in front, Petrika galloped furiously to over-

PETRIKA'S CART—*See Chapter III.*

take it, and obtained a supply of fodder. At about eleven o'clock we halted at a delightful *tsheshme* (fountain) behind which was a tract of green grass, some large trees, and a little wood on a slope. In the shade of one of the trees I lay, alternately writing and sleeping, while the women baked bread and cooked the meat Totana had purchased. Peasants brought their cattle to water, and children played at the troughs. There were several great waggons drawn by buffaloes, and two of the drivers, Turks, stripped themselves to the waist, tucked up their trousers to the knee, and for a full hour, in spite of the midday heat, wrestled splendidly. It was a fine sight, and would have been a valuable education for those who persist in believing that all Turks are effeminate old gentlemen with beards, who persecute innocent Christians and grow horribly fat in harems. It was evident that the wrestlers belonged to a virile race; good-humoured too, for one of their companions took a huge pitcher of cold water and poured it over their naked backs; but they only laughed and went on wrestling without a moment's pause.

As we drove along, in the afternoon, we saw a great thunderstorm raging in the east,

and soon realized that it was moving in our direction and overtaking us. There was no shelter in sight, and our only chance of escaping a very thorough drenching, was to reach the village of Pisantza. Petrika whipped up his horses and raced for dear life, while we clung fearfully to the cart. Pisantza is a picturesque little place on one slope of a valley, approached by a steep hill, descending the opposite side. The *taliga* had no brakes, and we came down that hill in grand style, Turi, at the command *rak anglal* (take care in front), springing to the head of the pole, and using all his strength to prevent our progress becoming an ungovernable and disastrous rush. At the bottom we passed the village and proceeded, as usual, to the public rubbish-heap. As we approached it great warm drops, the prelude of a deluge, began to fall, and I unheroically sprang from the *taliga* to seek shelter in a khan. Presently the other men joined me, and after a couple of glasses of beer, the storm having passed, we went to the tent which the women had meanwhile pitched.

Close to our camp was a small Gypsy *mahala* of about eight houses and four tents. The tents, though made of inferior cloth, were rather more

elaborate than ours, having three or more morticed arch-pieces. The houses were larger than usual, and built against the slope of the hill, in which they were partly excavated, so that, at the back, they were considerably below the level of the surface of the earth. They were of a dull brown; no attempt had been made to white-wash or decorate them, and the conspicuous neatness that had struck me in all other *mahalas* was absent. Nevertheless they seemed clean, and at night, when lit by the glow and the flickering flames of a wood fire, they were more picturesque within than the severely square and monotonously white Gypsy *kolibas* I had seen elsewhere. The inhabitants, amiable people who received us with Gypsy hospitality, were all smiths; and we found them busy at their trade in a large hut with a wide veranda, which seemed to serve as a common workshop. On the floor were arranged a great number of cleverly fashioned gimlets, which they had just produced, each with its wooden handle near it, ready to be fitted on; but they made also larger augers, and one man was industriously manufacturing a coarse file, or rasp.

There are worthy persons who will be sur-

prised, or even incredulous, when they read of Gypsies who deliberately and without compulsion sit down to do honest work. In 1580 Henry VIII. added an act to the statute-book, in which the poor Roms are libellously described as "outlandysshe People callynge themselfes Egyptians, usyng no Crafte nor faicte of Merchaundyce"; and the cruel name thus idly given has clung to the race, like a parasitic creeper, for more than three centuries, blossoming periodically with an ever increasingly brilliant florescence of rhetorical abuse. It is true that the Gypsy does not make a good factory-hand, and is therefore anathematized by those who believe that the thicker the atmosphere the more blessed the civilization. But when he can work in his own way, he applies himself to his task with a diligence rare among British artisans; and it is only in countries where he has been made idle by Act of Parliament that he is seldom seen earning his living by the sweat of his brow. Germany long ago slammed in his face all doors that led to an honourable livelihood, and then tortured and hanged him because he continued to live. Austria, Hungary and Spain forbade him to ply those trades in

which he particularly excelled, and, apparently on the principle that what is disagreeable must be wholesome, ordered him to support himself by those to which he had an innate repugnance. More recently he has been hard hit by the competition, facilitated by better means of rapid transit, of imported or factory-made goods; so that, for instance, his tinkering and basket-making are now less necessary for the comfort of British housewives than once they were. But in the near East he is free to exercise his talents, and the Gypsy artificer is still an indispensable part of the social organism. Extraordinarily versatile, the Gypsies turn their hands to many useful occupations, and excel in all, often so surpassing their *gadzhe* competitors that they obtain a monopoly of the trade. They are the only metal-workers in Palestine; for centuries they were the only musicians in Hungary; they are almost the only smiths in the Balkans. Although the proverb, "So many Gypsies, so many smiths," is an exaggeration, it would not be far from the truth in eastern Europe if it were reversed, and in modern Greek the word for "Gypsy" means also "blacksmith." No pay could tempt natives to

accept posts in the arsenal which was established in Montenegro in 1872. It was as impossible for a Montenegrin to do such degrading and characteristically Gypsy work, as it would have been for him to marry a Gypsy girl: how impossible that is was shown by the impoverished Montenegrin officer's answer to the German professor who had jokingly counselled him to marry a rich wife, for example a daughter of Krupp, the millionaire ironmaster. "I would rather suffer the greatest privations," he retorted quite seriously, "than wed a Gypsy's child!" Readers will, I hope, pardon me for having descanted at some length on honest and laborious, but unromantic Gypsy trades. Had I passed the blacksmiths of Pisantza with a brief mention, it might have been easy to assume that all Bulgarian Gypsies live by stealing hens and horses. As a matter of fact, the horse-thieves are a small but prosperous tribe, relatively no more numerous than company-promoters among civilized people.

After inspecting the *mahala*, Turi borrowed his father's passport, and overcame his objections to our leaving the camp, and we went hand-in-hand to see what the village contained.

It contained, of course, a school, the largest and most conspicuous object in the place; but we were more interested in a superior-looking building near the church, which, though labelled "Café" proved, to our disappointment, to be only a general shop. As we came out, a man called to us from the balcony of a house opposite, and we approached obediently, for he was the mayor, and wished to examine our papers. He professed to find them satisfactory, though mine must have been incomprehensible, and dismissed us after a few questions as to the object of my journey. Leaving the municipal offices, we sought out the butcher and bought meat, and then visited a little khan to drink wine. In the khan we also bought eggs, and tried to persuade the girl in attendance to cook them; but, though a fire was burning on the hearth, she resolutely refused. Having sufficiently honoured the despised Gypsies by serving them with drink, she evidently considered that a line must be drawn somewhere, so she drew it at boiling eggs! Feeling that we were unwelcome, we started for home, that is, for the municipal dust-heap, but paused to talk with the schoolmistress, who asked, in

French, why I wore such clothes, and herself suggested that it was to escape observation.

We halted again at a combined store and tavern, where our stay was prolonged by the arrival of our acquaintance the mayor. We became quite friendly, and he, somewhat indelicately since Turi was interpreter, inquired how I ventured to travel in such company as that of Gypsies, a race notorious even in Pisantza for their thieving propensities. I protested strongly against this accusation; maintained that even if other Gypsies stole, mine did not; and, in order that he might himself be witness to their scrupulous honesty, invited him to accompany us to the tent and drink coffee. If he did not accept the invitation with alacrity, he did at all events accept it, and returned with us in the dark. But, before leaving, he purchased a piece of Bulgarian embroidery, and presented it to me as a keepsake: and I, fortunately remembering that we had no artificial light, bought a small lantern and candles, as well as a new whip-thong and a string bridle for old Petrika, and a large bottle of *rakia* to enliven the entertainment. And pretty lively the entertainment proved, for our neighbours,

the smiths, clustered round the mouth of the tent in such numbers that the side-cloths had to be raised in order that all might be within the circle. The mayor sat in the seat of honour, with Petrika on his right, myself on his left, and the rest of our party a-squat before him, all within a ring of sitting and standing smiths, their dark, strong faces illuminated by the dancing beams of the burning sticks, and by the steadier ray from the candle in my new lantern, which was placed at the back of the tent, on the step of the *taliga*. The old lady made coffee, and we all drank *rakia;* and the sole subject of conversation was the uncorruptible integrity of Gypsy morals. But, every now and then I heard a smothered fluttering from the inside of the waggon, which I have every reason to believe was made by a hen that had recently come into our possession, as an involuntary gift from some *gadzho* neighbour, and was intended to grace our principal meal on the morrow.

When our guest had departed, we visited the smiths' houses to discuss the incurable folly of *gadzhe*, and wound up the evening with a riotous half-hour at a khan.

CHAPTER X.

THE FEAST AT RUSTSHUK.

We set off at about five o'clock through well-wooded country, and by roads which were almost lanes, and reaching the outskirts of Rustshuk at about nine, turned sharply to the right, and drove round the town to seek a camping place. There seemed to be some difficulty in finding one, and, in the end, the old people, with the *bori* and the child, drove towards the barracks, while Turi and I turned inwards towards the town. In a sort of open market-place, where a few peasants' carts still lingered, we met Gypsies, Turi's acquaintances, to whom I was introduced; and one of them, an elderly man, stared at me in silence long and severely, with evident suspicion. They gave us, however, the necessary directions, and accompanied us when we went to rejoin Petrika. There is no regular *mahala* in Rustshuk, but several families of Gypsies live near one another and, as usual, almost equally near the public refuse-heap. Their houses are rather larger than is usual in

Gypsy quarters, and have gardens or yards, into one of which we tried to drive, although the gate was far too narrow for the waggon. Having failed, we sat down on a rug in front of the house to talk quietly; but a sudden, violent, and extremely noisy altercation began between the women of our party and the *gadzhe* ladies next door, and in the middle of it Petrika suddenly resolved to camp opposite his friends' residence, in an insanitary site on the very edge of the refuse-heap, with a horrible barbed-wire fence close to our backs.

We were in luck, for a baby had been baptized that morning, and we were, of course, bidden to its christening feast. At the preliminary ceremonies of a Zagundzhi wedding, the presence of the bride and bridegroom is a matter of indifference to the invited company; if it happens to be more convenient that the young couple should go to work as usual, their marriage proceeds merrily without them. Similarly, at this Gypsy christening, the protagonist, having made its appearance in church, and provided the pretext for a banquet, was no longer necessary. We never saw the infant, and I do not even know whether it was a boy or a girl,

but I enjoyed to the full its baptismal party. We were guided from the temporary home Petrika had chosen, to a large house, unfurnished except with carpets and cushions, the dwelling of the child's parents, and placed in the seats of honour next the godfather, who acted as master of the ceremonies, and was no less a personage than Milano Nikoloff, *tsheribashi*, or as he preferred to be called, being a Christian, *thagar* (king) of the Rustshuk Gypsies.

Milano was a far more remarkable man than he appeared to be at first sight. Not tall, but sturdily built, he wore commonplace western clothes, and his skin was so pitted with smallpox that his visage would have been repulsive had not the Gypsy glitter of his eyes redeemed his appearance, and his extreme vivacity distracted attention from his face. He dominated the party, not as Osman would have done, by commanding silence and delivering a homily or a parable, but by taking the lead from the beginning, and never relaxing his hold over the company. I am not sure that he was Osman's intellectual superior; but he was more brilliant and more forceful. It was his ambition to

make the feast a success, and he achieved it by becoming himself the principal entertainer. He did most of the talking, and cracked most of the jokes; and, if the slightest symptoms of flagging interest were noticeable, he at once burst into song, in either Bulgarian or Romani as the spirit moved him. Although it was in the agreeable rôle of a solicitous and efficient host that I saw him, Milano's character had another and a stronger side, for he was a dangerous criminal. He had, for instance, murdered a *gadzho* who spoke uncivilly to his wife, and was discharged through the cleverness of his advocate, and a liberal distribution of bribes. I think he told me that the purchase of his freedom cost him seven hundred napoleons, but the sum is so large, that I doubt the accuracy of my memory; and his lawyer, whom I saw, hinted that a smaller expenditure had proved enough. With characteristic humour Milano insisted on being described, in the legal documents connected with the case, as *Tsar Tsiganski*, Emperor of the Gypsies.

When we first came into Milano's presence Turi whispered to me that out of one franc he could make two, which I took to be an oriental

way of saying that he possessed conspicuous business ability, until he himself told me that his profession, like that of Borrow's first Gypsy friends, was the making of false money, and that he had been prosecuted several times for the offence, but had escaped punishment. I suggested to him that he should visit a friend of mine who is interested in Gypsy metallurgy, for the purpose of exhibiting his skill; and four months later I received from this friend reports on Milano's methods, from which it appears that he combines with his coining an ingenious fraud, depending for its success, as did the Gypsy imposture described in bad Romani by Borrow as the *hokhano baro*, and by Leland, in worse, as *huckeny-pokee*, on the avarice and credulity of the victim. Milano, accompanied by two other Gypsies, arrived at the house, and, having brought a dish of red-hot coals into the dining-room, borrowed a half-napoleon and a franc. After melting these together in a small metal crucible, he poured the much-debased alloy into a clay mould, made in two halves, one for each side of the coin, and bound with iron, while his companions crossed themselves devoutly and prayed to God that

the casting might be successful. When the mould was opened a piece of money fell out which resembled a napoleon in every respect save one — it was white. But Milano folded it in oilcloth, with a little powder, thrust it into the fire until the wrappings were burned, dropped it into cold water, and polished it with salt, when it shone like a golden piece fresh from the mint. Not yet, however, was it perfect, for it lacked the ring of a genuine coin. Apparently that fault was easy to correct: he heated his forgery again for half a minute, cooled it by burial in the earth, and produced a napoleon so exquisitely counterfeited, that my friend wrote inviting me to return to Bulgaria and make my fortune.

I did not return. A fortnight after this demonstration a Bulgarian peasant called, begging my friend to use his influence with Milano, and urge him to complete at once an important contract he had undertaken seven months earlier. The idiot had entrusted him with five hundred napoleons, borrowed money, to be converted into a thousand; his creditors were pressing, and he was impatient to see the work finished. But Milano refused even to begin it

unless the peasant found him two hundred napoleons more, and his wretched client was in despair. When my friend heard this lamentable tale, suspicions arose in his mind, and he sent the counterfeit napoleon, made in his dining-room, to me. A glance at the surfaces and the milling, showed that it had been struck, and not cast, and scientific examination proved that it was perfectly genuine. Milano had performed a clever conjuring trick, giving twenty francs in exchange for eleven, and sacrificing nine francs, as sprat to catch a mackerel, in the hope that my friend, impressed by his skill, would speak words of comfort to the doubting peasant, and restore his confidence and gullibility.

We were the first arrivals at the feast, but the other guests followed us closely—about fifteen men, including a soldier who knew no Romani, but sang sweetly ; the women, among whom was Milano's pretty young wife, sat near the door and ate apart. The food was spread on three huge, white-metal trays, one of them decorated with a bold and effective incised pattern, which were set on tripods, to raise them a few inches from the ground. Before the feast began we were each given a napkin, and a youth

of extraordinary beauty, dressed much as I and Turi were dressed, carried round a metal basin, and a noble brass ewer of water, in which we rinsed our hands. The viands did not differ from those to which I had been accustomed during my journey, and we used, of course, our fingers, not knives and forks. There was a great abundance of food, and my neighbours taxed my ability as trencher-man by selecting dainty morsels from the stew, and presenting them to me whenever I stopped eating, sometimes even placing them in my mouth—an embarrassing Turkish method of expressing hospitable regard, to which I had been unused since the time when I quitted my nurse's arms. If the meat was plentiful, the wine was super-abundant. It circulated from hand to hand in great glass bottles, and in a large wooden gourd, about a foot in diameter, with brightly-coloured leather fittings, and a brass nozzle. No sooner had the guest taken a draught from one vessel, and passed it to his neighbour, than another was thrust upon him. And all, when drinking, made speeches, wishing various kinds of good luck to the company: *Te del amen o Del baxt hai sastipe! T' ashas*

saste-veste! Sastipe, mishtipe, barvalipe, te del o Del; t' azhutil amen saoren e Romen, hai t' arakel amen nasulimastar! So mangel amaro vogi te del amen! *—and so on, at great length, and with such frequent repetitions of *te del o Del* (may the God give) that it was impossible to escape the conviction that these profoundly dishonest people regarded the Almighty as their principal patron and accomplice. My vocabulary of blessings was soon exhausted, and I fear my little speeches suffered severely from monotony; probably, however, originality would not have been admired, for the Gypsies themselves showed no ingenuity in devising new forms of these primitive toasts.

When the guests had fed well and drunk well, the central ceremony of the feast took place. A metal plate or dish was set on a tray beside the remains of the food, some salt and a piece of bread were placed in it, and wine poured over them. Then Milano, as godfather and chairman, made a long and much emphasized speech, calling down blessings on the child, its

* May God give us luck and health! May we remain strong and healthy! Health, well-being, wealth, may God give; may He aid us all, the Gypsies, and protect us from evil! What our heart desires may He give us!

parents, brethren, and a whole pedigree of more distant relations, and therewith deposited a napoleon in the plate. The others followed in some definite order, all making speeches, and each contributing money, the amount being apparently regulated according to rule, for several after putting in their contributions, withdrew change from the dish. They took heed that the coins should become wet by contact with the wine, and those who gave paper money pressed it carefully to the bottom of the plate. When my turn came, I gave a British half-sovereign, to the evident delight of the assembly. When the ceremony was ended, there must have been ten or fifteen pounds collected, and presumably the money was to be used for the child's advancement in life. There followed much talking and drinking, singing and merriment; and a dusky and particularly charming little daughter of Milano, of whom he was very proud, danced prettily while her father hummed the tune, clapped his hands rhythmically and, between breaths, directed her movements.

When the company dispersed, we went to our tent—or rather *taliga*, for the tent was not spread that night—and there we were soon

joined by others. Old Petrika had looked supremely contented and happy during the whole festival, and, in his own home, was evidently enjoying the position of host; so Turi and I, with two others, slipped away to see the town before darkness came. We hired a carriage, and drove through the streets and suburbs—all very new, and very pleasant, and very plastery, and as unattractive as an international exhibition; but we found nothing of interest, except a melancholy Gypsy, in a solitary tent, pitched in a hollow near the point at which we had entered the town in the morning. So we returned to the town-midden, and supplied the old man and his guests with more wine.

CHAPTER XI.

MORE THAN BROTHER.

Night fell, and although conscious that I had had quite enough to drink, I found it difficult to refuse to drink more without giving offence to my now hilarious friends. So I suggested to the beautiful lad, who had carried water to wash our hands before eating, that we should take a carriage and see how the town looked at night. We had not walked fifty yards when Turi overtook us. "Brother," he said, "whither are you going?" "We are going to see the town. Come with us, Turi." "No, brother; I must stay with my father, for he is drinking." And then, after a pause: "You will spend much money. In the restaurants the *gadzhe* will cheat you. You will become drunk, brother. You will visit disreputable houses, and there, too, they will rob you." Then he sighed, almost sobbed, and asked, "Am I your brother?" "Yes, Turi; you are my more-than-brother *(po-phral)*." "Then, give me your money." With a readiness that now amazes me, without

a moment's hesitation, I drew the money-bags from my girdle, and put them into his hands: "Brother, here it is." Dare I place in many of my honest friends as much confidence as, at that moment of inspiration for which I can never be sufficiently thankful, I placed in the young thief? I withheld nothing, but gave him, unconditionally, every penny I possessed. He returned twenty francs, saying, "Go, brother. I wish I could come with you." It is impossible to describe the tones, melancholy and affectionate, in which Turi spoke; but I realized then that we were brothers—we loved one another.

It was a hollow pleasure, afterwards, to hire a cab and career riotously through the town with the beautiful lad. As long as the twenty francs lasted, we drank beer and wine, visited taverns and restaurants, and drove to the suburbs, in which were walled gardens of great trees surrounding brilliantly lighted cafés, where, in an atmosphere of forced gaiety and spurious pomp, bedizened houris ministered to the animal needs of man. The grief of parting had already cast its dark shadow upon my spirits and, in the midst of the specious pleasures of the town, my thoughts turned ever regret-

fully towards the Gypsy camp. Restless and disheartened, we sought empty entertainment even in a picture-palace ; but watched only for a few moments, and then resolved to go straight home. The lad invited me to sleep in his house, the house where the christening-feast had been celebrated, but nobody was within ; so I returned alone to the *taliga*, and found that Turi and his wife were asleep behind the waggon, while the old couple were still talking, and that another cart, belonging to a fine-looking Gypsy of middle age, who was travelling alone because his wife had run away and left him, was standing close to ours. Then, very sadly, I lay down on the kind earth to spend my last night with these dear and admirable people.

I awoke at about five o'clock. The others were already astir, and as soon as he saw me open my eyes, Turi approached and asked, "Do you remember, brother, where you were last night?" "Yes, Turi," I answered, "I remember everything." "How much money have you?" "About a franc and a half." "Do you know where the rest is, brother?" "Yes, Turi." And then he returned what I had given him, saying, "You would have lost it all, if I had

not taken it." "Thank you, Turi; you are good and kind, my brother." We drank coffee in silence, and afterwards I reminded Petrika that I must leave him that afternoon, and that the balance of his fee ought to be paid to him in the presence of the British Consular Agent. He showed some disinclination to go into the town, so I paid him there and then. Expecting difficulties, and fearing that Petrika would find some pretext to demand additional remuneration, I was surprised when he expressed himself as perfectly satisfied, and asked for no more than I had bargained to give. I have known honest people much less scrupulous than these Gypsies, who, during the week I was with them, neither caused me the loss of a halfpenny or of the most insignificant article, nor made any attempt to extort money, swindle me, or even best me by an inequitable bargain. So far as I was concerned, the moral standard of the horse-thieves was as high as it could be, and it stood the test of no little temptation. Then I turned to Turi and said, "Brother, I promised you ten francs. Here are twenty. I would give you more, for you are very dear to me; but I have a long way to go, and I have not much money.

I shall never forget you, brother." He threw his arms round my neck and kissed me.

These business matters pleasantly arranged, I accompanied Turi and Petrika to the dwelling of Marino Nikoloff, the *thagar's* brother; a comfortable little house of two rooms, well carpeted, but bare of furniture, with outhouses and a garden or orchard. As we sat drinking coffee and wine, the other male members of the clan gradually assembled to resume the christening feast, for Balkan celebrations are not exhausted in a single day; and the relations of the baby who formed the excuse for so much festivity, distributed gifts—a red cotton handkerchief for every man, and embroidered kerchiefs of better quality for the women. Our conversation turned on Gypsy life, particularly its seamy side; all boasted of stealing horses, and Milano inquired whether false money was abundant in England. When I replied that it is distinctly rare, he invited himself to stay with me for several months, presumably for the purpose of opening an amateur mint in my house, and correcting what he evidently considered to be a serious defect in our civilization. In return for their confidences, I described some British Gypsy

misdemeanours, among which the poisoning of pigs so greatly delighted them that they begged me to send them supplies of the necessary drug, and I was unscrupulous or weak enough to promise to do so.

At about eight o'clock, Turi and I left Marino's house to seek the British Consular Agent. In the town, for the sake of national credit, I was shaved, and then we began our search, which proved somewhat difficult. We consulted many people in the streets, but nobody could tell us exactly where the Consulate was, though each had a suspicion that it might be, or a conviction that it must be, in a certain direction. Thus they kept us oscillating between one end of the town and the other until our legs ached, though the wandering was not unprofitable, since we saw much of the place, besides meeting and discoursing with a pair of merry young Gypsies. Turi and I had long and intimate conversations, and I learned, during that last day, to understand and appreciate him, regretting vainly that our separation must follow so closely the recognition of his amiable qualities. He told me about the brotherhood ceremony, and we agreed to buy a lamb, at the

cost of about four francs, sacrifice it, cut our fingers, and so set the ritualistic seal on our fraternity. The word which Turi used to express this relationship was *po-phral* (more than brother), equivalent to the Servian *pobratim*, which English writers render by "sworn brother in God," Germans by *Wahlbruder*. The custom is widely distributed, and not originally Gypsy; it is well known in Albania and Servia, where, in past times, it seems to have been countenanced by the Church. One author asserts that the children of adoptive brethren are not allowed to intermarry; but, as a rule, the ceremony, although it entails all the privileges and responsibilities of brotherhood by birth, has no legal or political consequences. Unfortunately, I did not witness the comb-makers' ritual; that used by the nail-making Gypsy smiths of Aleksinac, in Servia, has been described by Professor Tihomir R. Gjorgjević. On the day appointed for the ceremony, the elder man invites the younger, with all his kindred and friends, to a feast, at which he rises and, after dipping a piece of bread in salt, swears: *Te marel ma o lon ta o maro, ako te na vikinav pralya!* (May the salt and bread kill me, if I do not call you

brother!) Thereupon he eats a piece of bread. The younger man makes the same declaration in the same way. One of the company then pricks with a thorn the little finger of the elder man's right hand, so that blood flows; and the younger man, seizing the wounded finger, places it in his mouth, and sucks the blood. The same guest afterwards pricks the younger man's finger, and the ceremony is repeated. Finally, the adopted brothers exchange kisses, and each of them embraces all the members of the other's family, presenting them with gifts, such as kerchiefs; then they drink spirits together, and the feast proceeds. A few days later, the younger man, in turn, gives a feast to the elder man and his relations, and thereafter they are counted brethren.

We found the Consulate at last, and delivered the Vice-Consul's introduction. The Consular Agent was highly amused, but very polite, and after writing for Turi the letter he required, acknowledging receipt of me, undamaged and in good condition, gave me the necessary information about steamers to Galatz, and kindly volunteered to accompany me to the military head-quarters to have my passport

visa'd. Turi waited in a little café close at hand, in earnest consultation with a tall and stout Gypsy, nicknamed Kara Mustafa (Black Mustafa), while we forced our way through crowds of half-stripped men awaiting medical inspection and enlistment, and arrived at the Commandant's office. The Commandant and his colleagues were also highly amused and very polite. They *visa'd* my passport at once, but kept me long in conversation about my journey and about the Gypsies. They told me that there was in the town a certain lawyer who was interested in the race; and when I said that I was extremely anxious to see him, at once offered to send him to me, and inquired at what hotel I was staying. My answer, under a cart on the municipal manure-heap, interpreted by the Consular Agent, caused shouts of gay laughter; and they were pleased to say many complimentary things about British love of knowledge, and British energy in pursuing it. Then they invited me to wait in the Commandant's own room while they sent for the Bulgarian Romany Rye, and I waited long, wondering whether Turi was impatient, and watching a succession of women interview the

great man, apparently in the hope of persuading him to exempt their husbands or sons from military service. But this eastern friend of the Gypsies could not be found, and I was obliged, after the waste of much time, to leave the military head-quarters without seeing him, but with profuse thanks to the Commandant for his kindnesses.

Patient Turi was still waiting, sitting sadly on the doorstep of the café, and I proposed to go at once and buy the lamb for our brotherhood ceremony. But he had heard news: his father, old Petrika, was drinking again, and, very dutifully, he was eager to return to the camp to see that he did not disgrace himself—filial piety came before brotherly love. He was so pathetically anxious, that I was obliged to give way. In the sight of God, he said, we were brothers, and the ceremony could be postponed until I returned to Bulgaria. I was greatly disappointed; but what could I do, but assent? It was the first favour my brother had ever asked from me. It was not the last, for within seven weeks of our parting Turi came with Gina to the British Vice-Consulate at Varna weeping bitterly, and begged the Vice-Consul to write

for help to me, his *po-phral*, sending ten waggons of health from him to me, to my father, and to my brothers and brothers-in-law, and from his father. He had been arrested for murder, released on bail, and was on his way to the hospital to have two bullets extracted. The Bulgarian postal organization was then in a chaotic state, and I did not receive the Vice-Consul's letter until more than a fortnight after it had been despatched. I telegraphed at once, and sent money; but had to wait three long weeks before I learnt the details of the tragedy. Returning from the fields to the camp at Indzhe-Kiöi, Turi had quarrelled, about his wages, with a Gypsy named Kirtsho, who acted as the farmer's paymaster. When they reached the tents, Kirtsho struck Turi, and shot him in the shoulder and leg with a revolver; in the mêlée, Kirtsho's child, six months old, was killed, and Turi was delivered to justice as the murderer.

The death may have been accidental; but the explanations offered by Turi and Petrika are worth recording, in view of the facts that, when search is made in a camp of Indian nomads, who may with some show of proba-

bility be regarded as relatives of the European Gypsies, the women occasionally dash out the brains of their babies, in order that the ghosts of the children may torment their persecutors, and that almost exactly similar conduct has been attributed to Gypsy immigrants at New York. Turi's account, which must be accepted with caution, since he was wounded and unconscious at the time, is that Kirtsho and his wife purposely slew their infant in order to provide evidence for accusing him of murder. Petrika alleges a superstitious motive, so extraordinary that it is difficult to believe that he could have invented it. According to him, Kirtsho's wife, seeing her husband shoot Turi, and believing that Turi was dead, took up her child and cast it, in Indian fashion, on the earth, Kirtsho himself completing the slaughter by throwing it repeatedly to the ground, in order that its sacrifice might be an atonement to God *(bedel le Devleske)* for her husband's crime. But Turi was not dead, and the atonement had been made in vain ; so they accused him of the crime, and handed him over to the police, hoping that the unbalanced account would be squared by a legal execution.

The indifference with which the murder was regarded, both by the authorities and by the Gypsies most nearly concerned, throws a lurid light on the eastern conception of the value of human life, especially when the victim is only a child, and only a girl, and only a Gypsy. After accusing Turi, Kirtsho fled beyond the mountains; but the comb-makers expected that he would have rejoined them at the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, which occurred soon afterwards, and would not have harmed him had he done so. For almost two years after the event, Turi, the accused murderer, was at large, on bail, and frequenting the scene of the crime. He was tried on the 7th June, 1915, and, after a hearing which lasted two hours in the morning, and five in the afternoon, was acquitted owing to the eloquence of Mr. Dzheko Dzhekoff, Prefect of Varna at the time of my visit, who argued that the parents, prompted by superstition, had slaughtered their own child.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RELAPSE TO CIVILIZATION.

Before rejoining the Gypsies, we went to the post-office for the purpose of telegraphing the news of my safe arrival to the Vice-Consul. At the pigeon-hole, also waiting to despatch a message, we found a tall, intellectual-looking Gypsy, named Todor Petroff, wearing a red plush *zabuna*, in charge of a policeman. He was a near relation of Turi, and, having just been arrested for horse-stealing, wished to communicate with his friends at Indzhe-Kiöi in order to ask that three napoleons should be sent at once for the cost of his defence. As that village is several miles from Varna, we arranged, instead, that I should request the Vice-Consul to take the message to the camp. I wrote telegrams in English and Romani; but none of them satisfied the Gypsies, and in the end we had to employ an old gentleman who haunted the corridor and, for a few pence, wrote the letters of the illiterate. I know that the Vice-

Consul carried the message faithfully, and that it caused consternation among the little community, and I hope that my poor friend was acquitted.

We returned to Marino's house and found that the christening feast was still in full swing. We had *peko mas* (roast meat), as well as boiled meat, with rice and onions, and there was much wine and much shouting, singing and merriment. But Turi and I sat silent, and every now and then he placed his hand in mine and gazed at me sadly; our hearts were very heavy. Then Milano, the *thagar*, invited us to his home, a pretty little three-roomed house, within an enclosure, surrounded by a high wooden palisade. It contained some furniture, a few pictures, and an eikon with a lamp before it; and from the chest of drawers he took various photographs of himself as a young man, and of his relations. In one of them, now sadly faded, he and his brother were represented in Turkish clothes, with a whole armoury of weapons in their girdles, holding the first horse they ever stole. His wife brought coffee and kissed our hands, while the dark little girl, who had danced so prettily the day before, played on the floor with

a number of tiny dolls. In his compound, Milano had a vine, several tall trees, and a bed of flowers, some of which he plucked to give us; and in it also he was building, doubtless with the five hundred napoleons, for the loan of which the peasant expected interest at cent. per cent., a new and larger dwelling, then almost ready for occupation. Close by was an outhouse, where his servant lived.

Making an appointment to meet him later, we left Milano and went to the *taliga* to fetch my luggage, such as it was—I easily knotted everything I possessed in the red handkerchief that had been presented to me at the feast. At the camp we found Turi's wife, to whom I gave my *yorgan*, and made my adieux, but the old people were neither at the cart nor in Marino's house, and, obliged to content myself with sending them messages, I set off with Turi to the river. As we entered the town we met a woman carrying two pails full of water, and Turi drew my attention to her at once, declaring that the meeting ensured for me much good luck. I am far from wishing to offer this superstition as a new argument in favour of the Indian origin of the Gypsies. That

ultra-conservative race, lagging behind in the advance of educational progress, retains superstitions after they have been cast aside by its neighbours: I almost believe it collects and treasures them as a connoisseur collects and treasures flint arrow-heads or old furniture. At all events, the Gypsy, in every country, is a walking museum of borrowed folk-lore; and before using his customs as a historical argument, it is essential to ascertain indubitably that they are genuine Gypsy customs which are not, and have never been, observed by the European peoples among whom he dwells as an unwelcome guest. Still, it is remarkable that among the Bhántus, the most suspiciously Gypsylike tribe in India, a woman carrying a pot of water is reckoned a favourable omen; and that the Russian Gypsies have a proverb: *Pherde sostrinindya, yamenge avela pherdo* (Meeting full ones, fullness will come to us), because they consider that full pails are very lucky, whereas, when empty, they are so unlucky that if, when setting out on a thieving expedition, a Gypsy meets an old peasant woman carrying empty pails, he returns home at once.

We found Milano at a grocer's shop, where we sat awhile to drink wine and soda water, before we drove to the quay. The boat, however, was late, and we waited in a café, drinking and talking mournfully. Presently a gentleman stepped forward and introduced himself as Dr. Marko Markoff, the legal Romany Rye to whom the Commandant had wished to introduce me. He proved to be a man of distinction and many accomplishments, widely travelled, even as far as London, and a great linguist, speaking English with an unusual correctness of accent. Evidently, too, he was a man of high ideals and humanity, for who else would have sought to obtain for the despised Gypsies the political rights to which they were entitled by the Treaty of Berlin, but which had never been given to them? In 1905 he began an agitation in their favour, forming a committee of representative Roms from different districts, and making speeches in various parts of the country. He presented to me a copy of the first manifesto issued by the committee, and I value it as an important document in the history of a persecuted race. We talked of the "Affairs of Egypt," of Balkan Gypsy-hatred,

of Milano's trial, of a university professor in Sofia who knows Romani well, and of the thousand-and-one topics which surge riotously up when two kindred spirits meet unexpectedly. I found his conversation so interesting that it was with great regret that I left Rustshuk. But his kindness and politeness were no less welcome than his talk, for he repaired my omission, which might have caused much trouble, to have my passport *visa'd* by the civil as well as the military authorities, and, when the boat arrived, conducted me on board and introduced me to several fellow-passengers, including a nephew of his own.

It was strange to sit there in Turkish disguise, and burned brown as a Gypsy by the sun, enjoying intellectual intercourse after a week with semi-savages, and hearing again my own language. But it was difficult to relapse suddenly into civilization, and perhaps the effort to present myself alternately to Dr. Marko as an educated man, and to the Gypsies as a comrade, intensified the pain of those last minutes. In spite of all prohibitions, Milano and Turi forced their way aboard the highly respectable Austrian boat, and into the highly

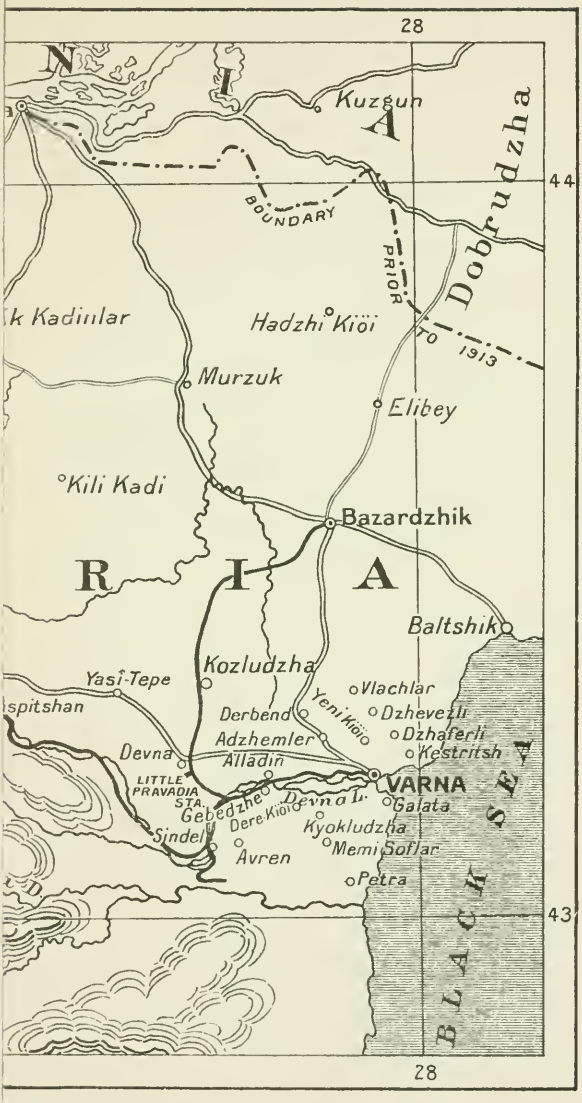
respectable saloon with me. We must have seemed a strange quartette to the highly respectable passengers—an advocate, in the sober garb of his profession; a Gypsy horse-thief, dusty and a little ragged; Milano, the coiner, marked by smallpox, vivacious and noisy; and a tall foreigner of Tartar type. Milano ordered an absurd quantity of expensive wine from the highly respectable German waiter, paid for it, and kept up a continuous stream of conversation, shouting at the top of his voice; while the spectators, forgetting their highly respectable manners, stood round and gaped at us, and I tried simultaneously to talk quietly to Dr. Marko, and bid a very sad farewell to my brother Turi. A little before the starting of the boat, Milano, hunting in his pockets, exclaimed, "What can I give you, that you may remember me?" and presented to me a small brush for the moustache, such as all the Gypsies carried. Turi was a little crestfallen, and said, "Brother, I have nothing to give you." "Turi," I replied, "I do not want anything. I shall never forget you." He wept a little; and perhaps it was well that Dr. Marko was with us, or we might have given way to extravagant

grief. Then the young man gave me much good advice: "Brother, the people in Rumania are all thieves. When you go into the town of Galatz, do not take more than two or three francs. They will rob you." And he warned me very kindly and very earnestly against spending too much money, and drinking too much wine. And then he threw his arms about my neck, and we kissed one another many times, there, in the saloon of the Austrian boat, and forgot that all the passengers and waiters were staring at us. But we could not speak; and with a long look into my eyes the dear fellow rushed ashore.

I said an absent-minded goodbye to Dr. Marko and Milano, and noticed as I did so that there was a Gypsy conscript soldier aboard, a man I had met before in his civilian clothes. But I took no notice of him, and waved farewells to Dr. Marko and Milano. Poor Turi had vanished. And as the boat steamed down the Danube I sat silently in the saloon and wondered whether the pleasures of our journey really compensated for the sorrow of parting.

THE END.

Printed by
R. McGEE & Co., LTD.,
34, South Castle St.,
Liverpool.


28
N
I
A
Kuzgun
Dobrudzha
44
BOUNDARY
PRIOR
TO 1913
k Kadiinlar
Hadzhi Kioi
Murzuk
Elibey
Kili Kadi
Bazardzhik
R
I
A
Baltshik
Kozludzha
Yasi-Tepe
spitshan
Vlachlar
Derbend
Yeni Kioi
Dzhevezli
Adzhemler
Dzhaferli
Devna
Alladin
Kestritsh
LITTLE PRAVADIA STA.
VARNA
Gebedzhe
Devna L.
Galata
Dere Kioi
Kyokludzha
Sindel
Memi Soflar
Avren
Petra
43
BLACK SEA
28
40
50 MILES

SIFTON PRAED & CO LTD ST JAMES ST LONDON S W

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

SRLF
2 WEEK APR 18 1991
5121 91

REC'D LD-URL
APR 19 1993
JUL 09 1993

REC'D LD-URL
DEC 30 1993

NON-RENEWABLE

JUL 21 2000

ILL-GEN
DUE 2 WKS FROM DATE RECEIVED

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 047 035 1